

It's a Strange, Strange World



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When I first entered the floriculture industry, a grower I met through the magazine, who will mercifully remain nameless, warned me that I was getting involved with a strange bunch of people. Nice, mind you, but a little odd.

I didn't know what to think when he said this, so I just laughed; I assumed he was just telling a joke to put me at ease. I've since come to learn that he was absolutely right — on both accounts, the nice and the strange.

The floriculture industry is great to work in; it's full of flowers, life and great people. The folks in the floriculture industry, while being a little off-center, are some of the nicest people I've ever met.

Let's be honest about ourselves, though: This is not your average nine-to-five, suit and tie, hardline kind of industry. (And, by the way, I do now proudly count myself among the ranks of the not-so-normal floriculture folks.)

AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

When you think about how the floriculture industry works, it actually makes sense that those who work in it would be a little less than "normal." After all, we are never thinking about things at the same time or in the same way as the rest of the world.

For example, try to think for a minute about poinsettias — not as a crop, but as a seasonal plant. What ideas do poinsettias bring to mind? Christmas, snow, everything about the holidays? Now think about poinsettias as a crop. What does that bring to mind? Certainly not holidays and good times. You think about Boytritis and about pulling black cloth in the heat of late summer.

To put it bluntly, growers are never in sync with the rest of the world. It's a necessary aspect of the grower's occupation that holidays and seasons get turned upside down. Floriculture people think about poinsettias every other time but when consumers do — we talk about them in February, after the trials; we talk about them in July-August when growers are selecting varieties (and just to make sure that you *are* actually off track with the rest of the world, we have variety suggestions on page 52 for you to try); and we talk about them through the fall, as the crop progresses (like our article this month on subirrigating poinsettias, which can be found on page 26). In fact, the only time we're not talking about poinsettias is the holiday season, when the rest of the world is looking for that perfect plant for their holiday display.

And the same is true for pretty much every other crop. Bulbs show up on our radar screen in the summer, well before even the earliest winter planting and long after spring flowering. In the next few months, by the way, is when bulbs will start making their transoceanic voyage to distributors and then growers in the United States. Information about the production problems that arise during this voyage can be found on page 28.

MIXING IT UP

By the way, while you're looking forward to next spring's bulb crop and dealing with the trials and tribulations of your on-going poinsettia, pansy and kale crops (see page 18 for research on fertilizer requirements for ornamental cabbage and kale), let me invite you to ponder the spring growing season that has just passed.

You heard me right. I want you to look forward and backward at the same time.

While the spring 2001 growing season was fresh in everyone's mind, *GPN* Editorial Assistant Catherine Evans and Associate Editor Brandi Thomas called growers around the country to see how they fared. Growers told us about the crops that sold well, the branding programs that worked and the ways they dealt with heating costs.

Because you're not already mixed up enough with poinsettias and bulbs and everything else, take a look at their responses on page 23. Simultaneously existing at two different points in time might be a fun new thing to try...but then again, you've probably already tried it!

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1/3 Page

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