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Another One Down

Well...it's here — the end of another year. Next month will bring resolutions and new starts and more trade shows than we could ever attend. But for now, all is peaceful and quiet. The Christmas crops are out the door, for better or worse, employees are taking a much-needed break, your ranges are empty and quiet...it's a great time to reflect. After all, a lot has happened this year in our industry: Our largest trade association got a new leader and a new name, John Holmes and OFA, respectively; America In Bloom completed its first competition; we lost several long-time friends in Bob Holley and Paul Ecke, Jr.; and our third-largest retail outlet, K-Mart, filed for bankruptcy. Just to name a few things.

Yes, it has been a busy year, and if you haven't already, now is the perfect time to evaluate what all of this means for your business. Did you grow the right crops? Should you have added another range? Is it the right time to buy a new bench system? Are you working with the right vendors? There's a lot to consider, and we thought that seeing how some of your peers answered these questions might help. Our way of doing that is the Annual State of the Industry Report.

READING THE REPORT

Most of you are familiar with the State of the Industry, from having seen it in the pages of *GPN* the past six years, so I won't bore you with too many of the details. Basically, we mail a 4-page survey to about 2,000 of your peers, tabulate the results and highlight the most interesting results in the pages of *GPN*. In years past, the survey has taken place in early spring, with the article appearing in May's *GPN*, but this year is a little different. We thought growers would probably have more time to answer a questionnaire and read the results at year's end instead of season's end. Hence the move of *GPN*'s Annual State of the Industry report from our May issue to the December one.

As in years past, the State of the Industry examines responses based on a national average, a regional average and size of operation to help you compare your business both with those of like size and with those in your immediate area. In many cases, averages from the past five years are also supplied so that you can better identify trends.

GPN started the State of the Industry, and co-sponsor Summit Plastics began supporting it, because of the lack of good research in our industry. The only other survey that can purport to cover our industry is USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service survey, which includes only the top 17 production states and covers such material as fruit and nut plants and Christmas trees, along with floriculture crops. We wanted to offer a survey to our readers that focuses exclusively on our part of the market, one that covers the entire country and one that is conducted by people who know the industry.

I know you will be comforted by this year's results. After facing problems like water restrictions, the third bad spring in a row and pricing pressures, I was happy to see this year's data look very similar to last year's. There are some fluctuations here and there, mostly with production costs and crops produced, but from my reading, we held our own this year. Congratulations.

One quick word of caution before I turn you loose to read the report in its entirety, starting on page 10. This is just a survey. We did not speak to everyone in the industry, and we did not verify answers. When you read the survey, please take these factors into account. What you will be reading is a snapshot detailing a closed group of people at a certain time who are estimating numbers to the best of their recollection. We do not claim that the averages presented will hold true for every greenhouse operation or that you should evaluate your business based on these numbers. The reason we conduct this survey is simply to let you know what's going on with some of your peers. And, with that said, enjoy the *GPN*/Summit Plastics Sixth Annual State of the Industry Report!

Bridget C. White

next month...

- A profile of floriculture's future: the winners of the *GPN*/Nexus Intern Scholarship.
- Industry leaders make their annual predictions for the new year
- Two studies evaluate the new PGR, TopFlor.

plus...

- Tags for hanging baskets
- Controlling slugs and snails
- Improving your sales tactics
- Ranunculus production tips