

The 9th Annual

# Forty under 40

# Introducing the Class of 2020

Now in its ninth year, GPN's 40 Under 40 program recognizes our industry's bright young stars.

**BY TIM HODSON**

I'd like you to meet GPN's 40 Under 40 Class of 2020.

Over the next 16 pages you will have a chance to learn about 40 young professionals who will be responsible for growing the industry in the years to come. This is your opportunity to discover who they are, what they do and what makes them tick.

These 40 up-and-comers have already been making things happen and will continue to do so for many, many years. As you will see, they have

the drive, passion and expertise that will propel our industry forward.

Everyone in this year's class was nominated by one of their peers for their accomplishments both in and out of the horticulture industry. It is their exemplary leadership, creativity, compassion and innovative thinking that have moved them to the head of the class — and now it's your turn to learn about them ... and, more importantly, from them!

Please meet GPN's 40 Under 40 Class of 2020.

Thomas Barlow  
Bob Berbee  
Robert Blew  
Ashley Brinegar  
Amanda Bruce  
Courtney Buckley  
Tucker Cole  
Pierre-Marc de Champlain  
Elizabeth Dunham  
Justin Dyk  
John Goglia  
Adam Greenberg  
Amanda Hershberger  
Caitlin Hupp  
Chelsea Johnson  
Joe Juricic  
Nick Lovelady  
Jackie Lyle  
Brent Markus  
Marci McIntosh  
Lorentina McKoy  
Nikki Melin  
Jessica Montgomery  
Jennifer Moss  
Daniel Norden  
Rose Oberholtzer  
W. Garrett Owen  
Elien Peters  
Sidney Phelps  
Krystal Snyder  
Reid Snyder  
John Steinlage  
John Terhesh  
Leland Toering  
Leah Van der Heide  
Richard VanderMuellen  
Ben Vlietstra  
Kata Kress Wallace  
Ryan Watkins  
Gina Zirkle

## Who's Next?

Do you think you might know somebody who belongs in GPN's next 40 Under 40 class?

Do you know a young horticultural professional who will be under the age of 40 (as of Jan. 31, 2021) who you feel belongs in the Class of 2021? If you do, then mark Nov. 1 on your calendar because that is when we will begin accepting nominations for the Class of 2021.

Previously nominated individuals who have not been selected for prior classes are eligible to be nominated again, as long as they are under the age of 40.

If you have any questions about GPN's 40 Under 40 program, please contact Tim Hodson, editorial director, at [thodson@greatamericanpublish.com](mailto:thodson@greatamericanpublish.com).



## Thomas Barlow

**HEAD GROWER**  
BARLOW FLOWER FARM  
SEA GIRT, NEW JERSEY

### Accomplishments:

- Helped build, manage and run company's newest award-winning growing facility.
- Manages all production of 100,000 square feet of covered and 3 acres of outdoor growing space to produce high-quality crops for the company's retail operation.

### Hidden Talents:

Thomas is an expert when it comes to the trendy dance, The Floss (ask your kids). "I crush it!" he says. He's also a master whistler.

### Tasty Side Business:

Thomas and his wife turned their chocolate making hobby into a side business. They buy whole cocoa beans and roast, crack, winnow, grind, temper and mold them into chocolate bars that they sell at markets whenever and wherever they can.



## Ashley Brinegar

**KEY ACCOUNTS MANAGER**  
BOTANY LANE GREENHOUSE  
DENVER, COLORADO

### Accomplishments:

- Helped company grow from five local customers/divisions to 20 in 11 different states and increase overall sales by 60%.
- Co-founded a Young Hort Professionals Outreach Committee called PlanT Ahead, through the Colorado Nursery Greenhouse Association, to raise awareness of the horticulture industry at high school level.

### Gotta Get Out:

Ashley loves doing anything outdoors — she has kayaked in Kauai, hiked in Machu Picchu and skied in the Swiss Alps ... and more.

### On Her Bookshelf:

Her favorite book is "The Sun and Her Flowers" by Rupi Kaur. "It is a beautiful reflection of self-love and self-growth throughout life."



## Bob Berbee

**OWNER**  
LEO BERBEE BULB CO./DUTCH MILL GREENHOUSE  
MARYSVILLE, OHIO

### Accomplishments:

- Opened an independent garden center at the age of 21 — now going into its 18th season.
- Participates in community events like the Giving Garden, a community garden that donates thousands of pounds of food to local pantries and the annual Care Train toy drive.

### It's All About Heart:

Bob is an advocate for heart health. Diagnosed with coronary heart disease in his mid-30s, he is "thankful each day for this early detection and that I can live an active and healthy lifestyle with my family."

### It's in His Blood:

Bob's family moved from the Netherlands to the U.S. when he was six weeks old, and he has been in the family business his entire life. "My first job ever was counting bulbs in my dad's warehouse."



## Amanda Bruce

**GENERAL MANAGER**  
CEDAR RIM NURSERY  
LANGLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

### Accomplishments:

- Along with her siblings, completely transformed family business over the past eight years from renovating the store to revamping the way they grow their products with "overwhelmingly positive" results.
- Serves on the retail advisory board for the British Columbia Landscape & Nursery Association and is a board member of the Garden Centre Group Cooperative in Canada.

### Most Rewarding Experience:

In her spare time, Amanda coaches a floor hockey team for the Langley Special Olympics.

### Pass the Remote:

Her favorite television series is "Friends," "because everything in life can relate back to an episode of 'Friends.'"

### What's for Dinner?

Amanda's favorite food is anything Mexican.

## Robert Blew

**VICE PRESIDENT**  
CENTERTON NURSERIES  
BRIDGETON, NEW JERSEY

### Accomplishments:

- As the third generation in the family business, helped to double the company's size in 15 years "without sacrificing plant quality of customer service."
- Co-owns the company along with his "two amazing siblings" (a brother and a sister) — the company produces more than 1,600 varieties for nearly 1,000 customers in 32 states.

### Not Only Does He Drum Up New Plants ...

While in college, Bob played in the drumline for the Penn State Marching Blue Band.

### Grandfather's Friends in High Places:

His grandfather (Ray Blew, company founder) moved his family to Ecuador for work in the late 1960s. During that time, he was on a first name basis with the president of Ecuador.



## Courtney Buckley

**HEAD GROWER/TRIAL MANAGER**  
SAKATA SEED AMERICA  
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

### Accomplishments:

- Successfully implemented a biocontrol program for the company's key vegetable crops grown for seed production.
- Is an adjunct professor who teaches greenhouse management. "I was enthralled and pleased to see my students become engaged and excited about the floriculture/horticulture industry."

### Taking a Deep Dive:

Courtney is a certified scuba diver and one day hopes to dive the Great Blue Hole in Belize in Central America.

### Favorite Flick:

"Willow" — "As a child, I related with the main character, a Nelwyn, and that if you believe in yourself anything is possible. I know, cheesy, but true."

### In Her Spare Time:

Courtney enjoys traveling, quilting and baking.





# SUNTORY WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE

**Lorentina McKoy**

North American Sales and  
Product Representative

**ON BECOMING A MEMBER OF GPN'S  
40 UNDER 40 CLASS OF 2020**

**Forty**  
under **40**

**SUNTORY**

SUNTORY FLOWERS

[www.suntoryflowers.com](http://www.suntoryflowers.com)

**Tucker Cole**

**CULTIVATION CONSULTANT**  
WD CONSULTING LLC  
LOUDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Accomplishments:**

- Travels the world advising cannabis and hemp growers on efficient and safe production methods especially navigating through the regulations. "It has been a life goal of mine to help growers produce safer products for the consumer."
- Presenter at GPN Cannabis & Hemp Conference and North Carolina Greenhouse Vegetables Growers Association discussing facility design and growing techniques.

**Gotta Stay Caffeinated:**

Tucker can't live without coffee. "Must have my morning coffee!"

**A Man with Wanderlust:**

"I cannot get enough of traveling. I try to find somewhere new to visit. I enjoy learning about new cultures and the foods behind them. Trying food from different areas can tell you an amazing story about who they are."

**Pierre-Marc de Champlain**

**TECHNICAL SERVICES DIRECTOR**  
BERGER  
ST. MODESTE, QUEBEC

**Accomplishments:**

- Created the company's Technical Services Department. As director, Pierre-Marc leads company's team of technical grower advisers that support the sales team in North America and plays an integral role as the primary technical adviser to growers in Asia and Latin America.
- Served as project manager in charge of developing company's natural fiber wood series product line.

**Smart, Athletic and Fashionable:**

One of Pierre-Marc's greatest personal accomplishments is finishing his college degree in Biotech Engineering while playing football on the Sherbrooke University team "and rocking the mullet!"

**Break out the Brushes:**

When he has some free time, Pierre-Marc enjoys painting. "I am not super talented, but I find it very relaxing."

**Elizabeth Dunham**

**VICE PRESIDENT**  
KNIGHT HOLLOW NURSERY  
MIDDLETON, WISCONSIN

**Accomplishments:**

- Responsible for leading the business her mother started in 1981 (wholesale propagator of woody plant tissue culture) into its fifth decade. "We are one of the only mother-to-daughter legacies in the industry."
- Serves on the board of directors of the International Plant Propagators Society Eastern Region.

**Food Faves:**

When it comes to menu choices, Liz's favorite foods are pizza, ice cream and cheese ... "cuz I'm from WISCONSIN!!!"

**Family with Roots:**

Liz's father invented WPM (Woody Plant Medium), a medium to grow woody plants in tissue culture, when he was professor at UW Madison, then her mother took that technology and built a business around it!



# Congratulations Jessie!

You've truly earned  
GPN's prestigious 40 Under 40  
recognition.



Congratulations to our Midwest sales  
representative Jessie Montgomery  
for winning GPN's 2020 40 Under 40 Award

McHUTCHISON

**sungro**  
HORTICULTURE

*Our Expertise is Growing*<sup>®</sup>

**CONGRATULATIONS  
GINA!**

We are very proud of Gina's selection to the prestigious GPN 40/40 club.

Gina drives our business with passion.

She is humble of our success, our long-term customer relationships, and of our commitment to be the best in the industry.

She exemplifies professional expertise and an unwavering commitment for Outstanding Results.

Gina Zirkle, M.Sc.

*Area Sales Manager, Northeast Region and National Golf & Sports Manager*

**sungro.com**



**Justin Dyk**  
**MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR**  
 WALTERS GARDEN  
 ZEELAND, MICHIGAN

**Accomplishments:**

- Served as general contractor and worked with the team to replace an old, unstable greenhouse range with state-of-the-art greenhouses. The project included tearing down 16 structures (approximately 35,000 square feet) and the construction of four propagation greenhouses totaling approximately 60,000 square feet.
- Develops and implements practical solutions to help enhance company's everyday growing and business processes.

**A Man of Many Talents:**

Along with his professional skills, Justin also is the pitcher for his church league softball team, and he can juggle and wiggle his ears.

**Great Getaway:**

His favorite vacation spot is camping at Mear's State Park in Pentwater, Michigan — the beach, sun, sunsets, ice cream, relaxing.

**John Goglia**  
**PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
 PLEASANT VIEW GARDENS  
 PEMBROKE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Accomplishments:**

- Oversees the production of Proven Winners young plants and finished plants. Manages a team that fluctuates to just under 100 people during the busy season.
- Works with temporary staffing agencies to create multiple staffing options for the company, building a culture with employees that brings confidence and happiness to each work day.

**Jolly Mon:**

John's favorite vacation spot to get away to is Jamaica where he tries to visit at least once a year.

**In His Spare Time:**

When he's not working, John enjoys spending time with his family, traveling and boating. He also enjoys Indian food.



**Adam Greenberg**  
**CEO**  
 iUNU  
 SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

**Accomplishments:**

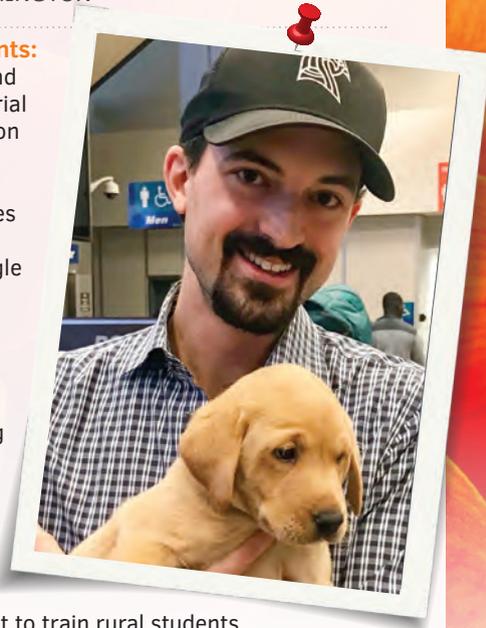
- Co-founder and CEO of industrial computer vision company that is connecting plants, facilities and people through a single interface.
- Company is committed to diversity in the workforce and is working to develop a curriculum component using proprietary technology and equipment to train rural students greenhouse occupations as well as a disability training program.

**Beloved Books:**

As a kid one of his favorite books was "White Fang" by Jack London ... as an adult, "Siddhartha" by Herman Hesse. "Good books are so good, that you learn something new when you read them each time."

**He Has a Different Point of View:**

Adam can read text upside down faster than most people can read normally.



**Forty**  
 under **40**

**Congratulations to Bob Berbee**  
 40 under 40 class of 2020!

*Essential to our family & business!*

**Leo Berbee Bulb Company | Marysville, Ohio**  
 berbeebus.com | (937) 642-0511

**LEO BERBEE BULB COMPANY, INC.**  
 QUALITY PRODUCT AND EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

# Forty under 40



Congratulations, Justin!

As maintenance supervisor, Justin goes above and beyond maintenance and actively seeks to improve Walters Gardens. He has had a hand in designing, building, and maintaining the acclimation range that was completed in 2017, along with overseeing various other improvements to our facilities.

## Amanda Hershberger

**PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT LEAD**  
SYNGENTA FLOWERS  
GILROY, CALIFORNIA

### Accomplishments:

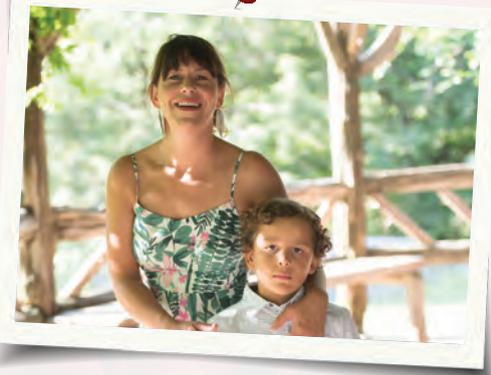
- Worked on Cora XDR Phytophthora-resistant vinca series breeding project beginning in 2012. "Through collaboration with the pathology and marketing teams, we were able to effectively bring this high value series to market. This was truly a labor of love!"
- Developed a robust insect pollination program at facility in Gilroy, California. Over the years, it has expanded to include a wide array of flower crops using controlled pollination provided by honeybees, bumblebees and flies.

### Don't Mess with Her:

"I played roller derby for 11 years and didn't die ... it's a full contact sport on wheels."

### Aloha Amanda:

Her top vacation spot is Maui. "Great weather, food and snorkeling."



## Caitlin Hupp

**TERRITORY SALES MANAGER**  
LOMA VISTA NURSERY  
OTTAWA, KANSAS

### Accomplishments:

- Responsible for advancing company into the digital age by designing its first website, launching a digital marketing effort, creating an online catalog and converting the sales team to a CRM.
- Expanded company's consumer base by creating, marketing and servicing multiple retail programs, resulting in additional volume in the retail channel.

### Off the Clock:

When she's not working, Caitlin enjoys doing interior design and remodeling projects. "Not only do I enjoy the design aspect, but also the sense of accomplishment when I learn a new skill and complete a project."

### A Great Escape:

"My family owns a lake cottage in a small town in Ontario, Canada, where my grandmother was born. The cottage has been in our family for three generations."

## Chelsea Johnson

**SOUTHWEST DIVISION SCHEDULING MANAGER**  
TREETOWN USA  
PERRIS, CALIFORNIA

### Accomplishments:

- Facilitated integration of three systems, processes and cultures following Village Nurseries' acquisition by TreeTown USA and subsequent acquisition of Hines Growers.
- Responsible for managing the production planning/production scheduling and for managing inventory including salable inventory and production planting.

### Dinner and a Movie:

Chelsea's favorite meal and movie are a #2 with grilled onions and a pink lemonade from In-N-Out Burger and watching Adam Sandler in "Happy Gilmore."

### Ready, Set, Spike:

She played club volleyball in high school and went to the Junior Olympics. "I was fortunate to be able to practice with three-time Olympic gold medalist Misty May-Treanor and meet Gene Simmons from KISS while playing against his daughter."



*Congratulations Jennifer!*  
We are so proud of you.

# Congratulations!



Congratulations Sidney! Well Deserved. Your relentless drive and innovative approach have built our ecommerce business into a growth-driver for the company.

You always find a way to “make it happen”. Your collaborative and team-first spirit continues to drive Bonnie to new heights.

Thank you for all you do every day...

*War Eagle!*



[WWW.BONNIEPLANTS.COM](http://WWW.BONNIEPLANTS.COM)

**SIDNEY PHELPS**  
Ecommerce Director

**Forty**  
under **40**

## Joe Juricic

MARKET AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGER  
LANDSCAPE HUB  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

### Accomplishments:

- Responsible for building a diverse supplier network of nursery growers and distributors that would allow contractors, architects and rewholesalers to find all their plants on one online marketplace.
- As a landscape contractor, was responsible for managing the landscape installation of the headquarters of the Radio Flyer Corp. — a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum Certified Project.

### Gotta Get out:

When he's not working, Joe enjoys the outdoors — fishing, hunting, hiking, camping and arboretum tours in other states, as well as working on classic cars and race cars.

### Reaching New Heights:

Joe was a pole vaulter on his high school track team and came in third place at the state championship.



## Brent Markus

FOUNDER  
INSTANTHEDGE, RARE TREE NURSERY/CONIFER KINGDOM  
CANBY AND SILVERTON, OREGON

### Accomplishments:

- Manages three nurseries remotely. "I started as a landscape designer and while I've built my nurseries in Oregon I've also been building landscape design businesses in Chicago and Boston."
- Developed and introduced InstantHedge (a finished modular hedge) to the U.S. market.
- Has grown 2,000 different varieties of conifer, Japanese maples and unusual woodies since 2007.

### In His Spare Time:

Brent likes to collect vintage bourbon bottles and enjoys grilling for any size party. "I love to entertain."

### Wide World of Horticulture:

"Horticulture has exposed me to so many amazing people — from selling Japanese maples to Martha Stewart to visiting famous collectors' gardens throughout the world, it's opened my world."



## Nick Lovelady

MARKETING PROFESSIONAL  
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN

### Accomplishments:

- Completed the Latinos in the Workplace certificate program from the Ohio State University and is an advocate for the agriculture/horticulture workforce.
- During the last recession, Nick was the first person named and featured as "Social Media Savvy" by the Kitchen & Bath Business magazine.

### A Warm Welcome:

Nick is a humanitarian. "Not an oft-used term, but the embodiment of southern hospitality. I'm pretty sure I'm happiest when serving and feeding others. Needless to say, I throw a good party."

### Character Building Flicks:

His favorite movies are Christopher Guest films — "Spinal Tap," "Waiting for Guffman," "Best in Show," "A Mighty Wind," and "For Your Consideration." "Few films have captured the unique characters we encounter in daily life better!"



## Marci McIntosh

MARKETING PROJECTS COORDINATOR  
FOUR STAR GREENHOUSE  
CARLETON, MICHIGAN

### Accomplishments:

- Spearheads many of the company's marketing projects, including organizing consumer events, production of three different catalogs, two websites and an extensive photography library.
- Helped launch the company's internal TV system that keeps hundreds of employees up-to-date on company and industry news and developments.

### Traffic Jam in the Driveway:

Marci loves cars and motorcycles and owns a 2003 Mustang, 1957 Met, 1948 Ford pickup and a 1981 Suzuki GS550, but in the summertime usually rides her bicycle to work.

### Keeping It in the Family:

She lives on her family's 66-acre farm that her great grandfather, Otto Hartwig, built in 1926. Marci's son, Otto, is the fifth generation to live there.

## Jackie Lyle

LOGISTICS & BRAND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER  
CIVANO GROWERS  
TUCSON, ARIZONA

### Accomplishments:

- Serves as chairwoman of the City of Tucson Landscape Advisory Committee, and is the voice of the community speaking at mayor and city council meetings on landscape issues.
- Earned her official arborist certification from the International Society of Arboriculture.

### A Woman on the Move:

Some of her favorite hobbies include distance running and triathlons (she's working on her first full marathon), traveling and visiting amazing trees around the world, and hiking and rock climbing.

### Bonjour and Bon Appetit!

Jackie's favorite city to visit is Paris "because the food, wine, museums and gardens are amazing ... hands down the best city on the planet."



## Lorentina Mekoy

NORTH AMERICAN SALES AND PRODUCT REPRESENTATIVE  
SUNTORY FLOWERS  
TOKYO, JAPAN

### Accomplishments:

- Made the transition from breeder to customer/grower relations to help identify what realities and struggles the industry is facing every day and applying that to her business.
- As a production manager, she revamped, built and motivated a previously challenged production team to always be ahead of schedule or on time with production needs (both live goods and hard goods).

### Go to the Head of the Class:

Lorentina graduated from Texas A&M with a bachelor's degree in horticulture in only three years while working full time and paying her own way through college.

### Relaxation Time:

When she's off the clock, Lorentina enjoys listening to music, hiking, crafting and hanging out with her dogs.





## Nikki Melin

**SALES OPERATIONS MANAGER**  
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS  
ST. CHARLES, ILLINOIS

### Accomplishments:

- Helped design company's order assembly process using lean flow techniques to build a new, more efficient process.
- Has worked in all areas of company's sales operations including managing the sales team, wholesale pickup, shipping and internal distribution. "I got to understand each department from working directly in it, and using that experience to develop new managers and supervisors."

### When It Comes to Hobbies:

Nikki enjoys traveling, hiking, birding (she's been to the great Sandhill Crane migration in Nebraska and got to see an elusive whooping crane!), paint-by-numbers and hanging out with her cats.

### Really Knows How to Spearhead a Project:

Nikki was on the University of Illinois track team and threw the javelin.

## Jessica Montgomery

**SALES REPRESENTATIVE**  
MCHUTCHISON HORTICULTURAL DISTRIBUTORS  
WAYNE, NEW JERSEY

### Accomplishments:

- Serves on the board of the Western Nursery and Landscaping Association, "where I get to be a part of promoting growth and networking in our industry over the next several years."
- Born into the horticulture industry, she is responsible for managing 115 customers over a large Midwestern territory.

### Book to Re-Read:

"Lean In" by Sheryl Sandberg. "I believe this book helped shape my career. It inspired me to 'lean into the table' as a female in the workplace .... I still listen to this book every few years as a refresher."

### Fore!

Jessica has played golf since age 7, and went to college on a golf scholarship. She had her first ever hole-in-one last summer.



## Jennifer Moss

**DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING**  
MOSS GREENHOUSES  
JEROME, IDAHO

### Accomplishments:

- After company lost its largest customer (due to liquidation and closure), she hit the road and recaptured 90% of the business for that product that was already in the ground that season.
- Responsible for building a management training program that is simple in structure and execution and helped create an interactive, positive environment that helped shift the company culture.

### Can't Live Without:

Music! "I live for music and live performances are my jam. On a stressful day during peak season, I unwind by buying concert tickets so I have something to look forward to." Her favorite band is Dirty Heads.

### What's on the Menu?

A good rare steak with fresh veggies roasted and seasoned well, covered in butter.

# Congratulations!

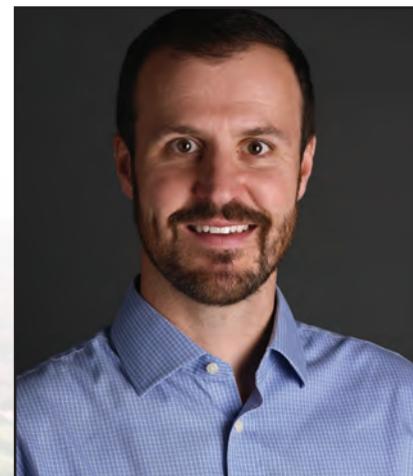
Congratulations to Reid, John and Leland on your selection as members of 40 Under 40, Class of 2020! Thanks for helping Ball Horticultural Company deliver on our promise of "All the Best and Nothing Else."



### Reid Snyder

Product Development  
Manager-Cut Flowers  
BloomStudios™

Reid helped launch several annual varieties at PanAmerican Seed® and is now focusing on product development and sales of seed, vegetative and tissue-culture raised cut flowers for new venture BloomStudios.



### John Steinlage

Sales Representative  
Ball Seed®

John has developed an understanding of the horticulture industry in the United States and abroad. He relies on his experience working in large commercial greenhouses to aid greenhouse grower customers.



### Leland Toering

Sales & Marketing  
Manager-Perennials  
Darwin Perennials®

Leland infuses business intuition and enthusiasm into the world of perennials at Darwin Perennials. He helps solve growers' challenges in marketing, positioning and producing exciting new perennial crops each season.

## Daniel Norden

SENIOR R&D AND TECHNICAL MANAGER –  
HORTICULTURE  
PROFILE PRODUCTS  
BUFFALO GROVE, ILLINOIS

### Accomplishments:

- Helped to commercialize and introduce innovative new substrate raw material, HydraFiber, to the horticulture market.
- Was a member of the R&D team at one of the first substrate companies to successfully commercialize the first wood fiber substrate. Also served as company's quality control manager.

### Pic to Click:

Daniel's favorite hobby is photography. He started when he was 5 years old and plant macrophotography is one of his favorite subjects today.

### Pass the Popcorn:

"The Empire Strikes Back" is his favorite movie. "For a kid growing up in the 80s, there was nothing better and it still holds up today. It is special getting to watch them with my kids now that they are old enough."



## Elien Peters

OWNER-DIRECTOR  
GEDIFLORA  
OOSTNIEUWERKERKE, BELGIUM

### Accomplishments:

- As a third-generation business owner, she is proficient in five languages, which helps her to navigate the world of horticulture on almost all continents.
- A driving force and inspiration behind many of the company's new Belgian mum introductions, she takes great pride in helping growers be successful with mum genetics.

### A Good Balancing Job:

She enjoys spending time with family and friends and finding just the right balance between career, family, friends, and me-time.

### On Her Bookshelf:

"Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill and "The Seven Sisters" by Lucinda Riley ("Perfect holiday reading, no thinking at all."), along with inspiration personal development and self-improvement books.



## Rose Oberholtzer

INNOVATING MANAGER  
NEAL MAST GREENHOUSES/MAST YOUNG PLANTS  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

### Accomplishments:

- Responsible for collecting and providing trial data and results to the breeding companies, as well as company staff, to help inform their business decisions.
- A graduate of Michigan State University, she started as a section grower in the company's finished division and was promoted to current position three years later.

### A Cook with a Book:

Rose likes to bake and read. "There was a time when my coworkers were sick of me bringing cookies in to work for five consecutive days."

### A Book that Talks to Her:

"The Silmarillion" by J.R.R. Tolkien. "The book is a masterful blending of religious mythology and epic world building. It's incredible to think that Tolkien created a universe and wrote several books in order to use his constructed languages."



## Sidney Phelps

DIRECTOR OF E-COMMERCE  
BONNIE PLANTS  
UNION SPRINGS, ALABAMA

### Accomplishments:

- Responsible for managing company's efforts in the e-commerce channel including sales, marketing and logistics. In 2020, sales will top \$1 million, from direct-to-consumer efforts, e-tailers, and interconnected retail with traditional brick-and-mortar stores.
- Started with company as a sales representative and also worked in distribution and various areas of the company. He helped develop a new supply chain and fulfillment infrastructure separate from company's traditional operations.

### Take Time to Fire up the Barbecue:

Sid participates in competitive BBQ contests. "I love to cook and grill in my downtime."

### Don't Forget the Sunscreen:

His favorite place to get away from it all is anywhere near the water. His favorite vacation so far has been deep sea fishing in Costa Rica.

## W. Garrett Owen

ASSISTANT EXTENSION PROFESSOR OF  
HORTICULTURE  
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY  
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

### Accomplishments:

- Served as greenhouse/floriculture outreach specialist focusing on propagation and nutrient management of herbaceous perennials, greenhouse substrates and alternatives, and floriculture crop diagnostics.
- Started his own greenhouse business in high school and maintained it during his undergraduate and graduate years in college.

### A Movie Featuring Dinosaurs and Plants:

Garrett's favorite flick is "Jurassic Park." "It intrigued my interests in archaeology, paleontology, and paleobotany. I thought it would be fascinating to discover and study megafauna or recover and identify plants that had not seen the light of day for millions of years so that others could learn and be amazed."

### Every Moment is a Kodak Moment:

Garrett has a photographic memory.



## Krystal Snyder

EXTENSION EDUCATOR  
PENN STATE EXTENSION  
NAZARETH, PENNSYLVANIA

### Accomplishments:

- Provides technical support for greenhouse growers and nursery operators and is a member of the Penn State Hemp Team and the Floriculture & Greenhouse committee.
- Helped launch, co-produce and star in a video series highlighting the Penn State University Flower Trials.

### It All Adds up to a Love of Plants:

Krystal started her collegiate career as a math major but was swayed to the "green side" by the horticulture department chair.

### Captain Caffeine:

When she's not working, Krystal enjoys spending time on her vintage boat with her family. She also says she can't live without coffee. "Can I get an IV of it?"





**John Steinlage**  
**SALES REPRESENTATIVE**  
 BALL SEED  
 WEST CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

**Accomplishments:**

- Planned, organized and executed an international floriculture tour during the FlowerTrials in Europe. "This trip was a once in a lifetime opportunity for many of our customers and colleagues so putting it together was very satisfying."
- Works with growers and retailers using company's new products and resources to find unique and innovative ways to help them build their business.

**He's an Active Family Man:**

John speaks German, plays the cello, can't live without coffee and enjoys being active including hiking with his family, running, and playing golf and hockey.



**TGIF:**

Friday night is pizza night in the Steinlage household. "We make homemade pizza on Fridays and it's always something to look forward to at the end of the week."

**John Terhesh**  
**NURSERY DIRECTOR**  
 GOODMARK NURSERY  
 WONDER LAKE, ILLINOIS

**Accomplishments:**

- Researched and implemented a new water treatment system that eliminated biofilm buildup in drip lines. System helped reduce labor expenses by \$50,000 and eliminated fungal and bacterial spores from the water.
- Managed a propagation and container operation and was able to increase production more than 100% and increase propagation success rates from 60% to 95%.



**Off the Clock:**

John likes to go backpacking. "I like the challenge and the simplicity of the days and exploring an area that few people have experienced. My favorite trip was the national lakeshore along Lake Superior."

**During the off Season:**

John is a competitive curler. "It blends very well with the seasonality of the green industry and it keeps me active in the winter."

**Reid Snyder**  
**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**  
 BLOOMSTUDIOS  
 SANTA PAULA, CALIFORNIA

**Accomplishments:**

- Part of the team that helped launch BloomStudios, a new business within Ball Horticultural Co. focused on the breeding and development of new cut flower varieties.
- For 10 years, participated in parent company's planning and execution of California Spring Trials and served as corporate coordinator in 2016.

**In It for the Long Haul (All 26.2 miles):**

Reid has completed three marathons. "It's not something I ever imagined doing once, let alone three times and required months of preparation and dedication."

**Ready to Go:**

Reid always keeps his passport nearby. "Whether for business or pleasure I enjoy traveling the globe, trying new foods and learning about different cultures." He also enjoys running, hiking, camping and biking.

# Congratulations

**Amanda Hershberger** for being named one of GPN's Forty Under 40 class of 2020!

Amanda's passion for her work in plant breeding and productivity improvement consistently delivers innovative solutions for Syngenta Flowers. Her intensive and thorough phytophthora resistance breeding created the game-changing Cora® XDR vinca series in record time.

**We look forward to your next great innovation, Amanda!**



Cora® XDR Mix

**Leland Toering**

SALES AND MARKETING MANAGER  
DARWIN PERENNIALS  
WEST CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

**Accomplishments:**

- While working in Australia, was able to apply skills learned in the U.S. to the business and culture “down under.” When he returned to North America, successfully applied skills learned in Australia to U.S. business.
- Has worked in many areas of the industry — from cut flowers to perennials and from packing/shipping to importing to sales and marketing. “I am most proud of developing a network of relationships in each one of these roles and experiences.”

**People Person:**

Leland loves working with other people. “I thrive on relationships, teams, and interacting with customers, suppliers and salespeople.”

**He’s an App Man:**

“I am a sucker for appetizers — cheese and crackers, chips and salsa — anything pre-meal!”

**Leah Van der Heide**

GREENHOUSE & NURSERY SALES SPECIALIST  
BASF  
RESEARCH TRIANGLE, NORTH CAROLINA

**Accomplishments:**

- Started in the industry as a grower and successfully finished her first crop — 400,000 cyclamen. “I didn’t kill them ... and they looked pretty good, too!”
- Works with consultants, distributors and end users in greenhouses and nurseries to solve weed, disease, and insect pest problems. She is also bilingual. “Becoming fluent in Spanish ... Hands-down that is the best and most important thing I’ve accomplished.”

**Funny Lady:**

Leah performs improvisational comedy. After college, she spent a month in Scotland performing daily at the International Fringe Festival.

**Flick to Pick:**

“Titanic” is Leah’s favorite movie. “It’s got everything you could ever want in a movie: love, action, suspense, historical references ... and Leonardo DiCaprio!”

**Richard VanderMuellen**

HANGING BASKET SUPERVISOR/SEEDING SUPERVISOR  
WOJO’S GREENHOUSE  
ORTONVILLE, MICHIGAN

**Accomplishments:**

- Develops practical solutions that improve company’s overall productivity and enhance product quality. Also is a frequent presenter in garden center’s educational program on a wide range of subjects.
- While attending Southeastern Louisiana University, was the recipient of the prestigious Ira Nelson scholarship from the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association.

**When He’s Not Working:**

Rick likes to be creative and do artistic projects, “anything that involves working with my hands. I enjoy spending time designing landscape projects and working in the garden and flower beds at home.”

**Top Two Tomes:**

Rick’s two favorite books are “Can’t Hurt Me” by David Goggins and “The Culture Code” by Daniel Coyle. “Both books can motivate and humble you at the same time.”



# Congratulations

## 40 UNDER 40 RECIPIENTS

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**Ben Vlietstra**

IT MANAGER  
INNOVATIVE SOFTWARE  
SOLUTIONS  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

**Accomplishments:**

- Helps implement remote tools and procedures to assist Picas users, as well as other staff members, to provide faster and more reliable support for users and servers.
- Works with growers in a variety of unique infrastructures and builds disaster recovery solutions for customers. “Our goal is to have systems in place that allow us to be their IT department when necessary.”

**Laughing for a Great Cause:**

Every year, Ben volunteers with Laughfest, a multi-day comedy festival, that is the major fundraising initiative put on by Gilda’s Club/Cancer Support Community.

**After Hours:**

His hobbies include snowboarding, concerts, reading and cheering for Detroit sports teams. He is also training to be a part of the National Ski Patrol.



## Kata Kress Wallace

**PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR**  
HOFFMAN NURSERY  
ROUGEMONT, NORTH CAROLINA

### Accomplishments:

- Along with a coworker, developed a system for employees to be rotated through departments to keep them engaged by varying their daily tasks. This also helps avoid injury, creates greater efficiency and more motivation.
- Served on multiple committees for the Perennial Plant Association's conference and worked with association to ensure the conference was a success.

### A Global Approach:

Kata works with a team of 25 from five countries and who use seven different

languages. "I am most proud of seeing the results of team building I have implemented ... It is great to see the inclusivity across nationalities."

### Austrian Appetite:

Originally from Austria, dining is an event for Kata. "In Austria, we celebrate eating like nothing else. We come together and eat, drink and just talk for hours."



## Ryan Watkins

**GENERAL MANAGER**  
BROWNSWOOD NURSERY  
JOHNS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA

### Accomplishments:

- As a third-generation family member, is helping advance a 42-year-old garden center to the next level, while developing a culture of "Inspiring people to grow."
- His design/installation work has been featured on local CBS affiliate, the DIY Network and HGTV. Also was selected to join AmericanHort's Retail Community Connector committee.

### Cleared for Takeoff:

Ryan loves to fly and has his private pilot's license.

### It's All About Family:

Ryan's favorite film is "The Family Man" starring Nicolas Cage. "It really speaks to the temptation of giving everything you have to your work instead of your family. If you gain the whole world but lose your family, you lose. If you give everything you have to your family, but don't acquire all the wealth and professional prestige, you still win."

## Gina Zirkle

**AREA SALES MANAGER**  
SUN GRO HORTICULTURE  
AGAWAM, MASSACHUSETTS

### Accomplishments:

- Earned her master's degree while working full time. Upon graduation, converted her thesis work into two peer-reviewed scientific journal articles that were published.
- Actively involved in industry associations including being the first woman president of the Ohio Lawn Care Association.

### A Seasoned Cook:

"I like to grill in the summer and make soups in the winter. I often go for comfort foods."

### Studied at the Hogwarts School?

Her favorite books are the Harry Potter series of novels. "I loved reading them and it was fun to see the books turned into movies. I don't have a wand or cape, but I have convinced my children I can place spells on them if they misbehave." *gpn*



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