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Front Lines

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They Don’t Look a Day Over …

Ellen C. Wells

National Garden Bureau launched its “America 250 Our Roots” initiative to share the origin stories of its member companies. Generations of folks behind horticultural businesses have shaped the landscape—literally—of plant breeding, nursery production, garden retail and consumer engagement.

“America 250 is an opportunity to recognize that horticulture has been part of the country’s economic and cultural development for generations,” said Diane Blazek, Executive Director of National Garden Bureau. “Many of our member companies have histories that mirror the growth of modern gardening, from seed distribution and mail-order catalogs to breeding breakthroughs, container production and branded plant introductions.”

Some NGB members that are long and storied include:

- Breck’s, founded in 1818, is one of the oldest direct-to-consumer bulb brands in the U.S. market.
- Ernst Benary Seed Co., founded in 1843, is one of the world’s oldest plant breeding companies and a longtime force in floriculture genetics.
- Syngenta Flowers, founded as Sluis en Groot in 1867, has grown into a global company, with innovations such as AAS Winner Calliope Geranium, Sunfinity Sunflower and Imara Impatiens.
- Park Seed Company, founded in 1868, and Burpee, founded in 1876, helped show the reach of seed catalogs and mail-order marketing in building the consumer gardening market.
- Gurney’s Seed and Nursery, founded in 1866, reflects how seed and nursery businesses scaled alongside the expansion of national distribution.

Impressive years! You’ve got a while before you catch up to my family farm’s founding in 1661. **GP**