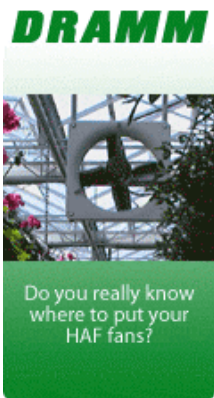


Bell's New Partner; TreeTown's New Name



GrowerTalks' Acres Online

News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Central Garden buys Hopewell
- Why?
- How Bob got his start
- TreeTown USA's new name
- Correction
- Do you know what Week it is?
- Mitchell's poinsettia trial
- YGA's new sponsors: GCG



Central Garden & Pet to Acquire Hopewell Nursery



Central Garden & Pet, the owner since 2018 of Bell Nursery, announced last week that it will be acquiring Hopewell Nursery of Bridgeton, New Jersey, a leading livegoods grower serving Home Depot, plus retail nurseries, landscape contractors, wholesalers and garden centers across the Northeast.

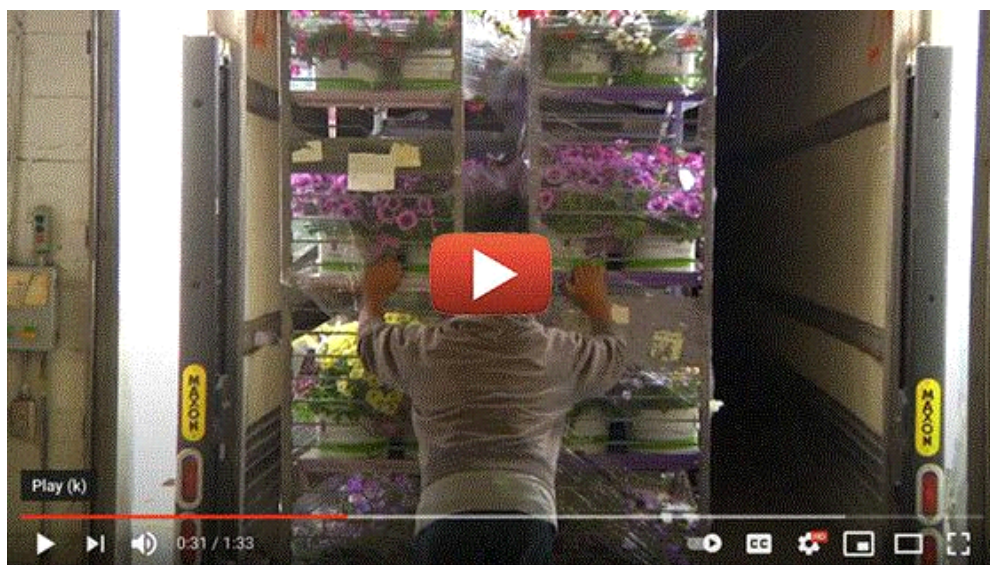
Hopewell, founded in 1988 by Bob Ench (more on that below), owns 11 farms on 2,500 acres in New Jersey and Maryland, which include 10 million square feet of greenhouse production and 200 acres of pot-in-pot nursery production. They produce 2,000-plus varieties of plants, mostly in the trees and shrubs categories. The company currently employs approximately 500 people.

"The addition of Hopewell Nursery to the Central portfolio further bolsters its position as a leading live goods provider in the garden segment," said the press release.

"We are pleased to welcome Hopewell Nursery into the Central Garden & Pet portfolio and further expand our live goods business," said Tim Cofer, CEO of Central, which is based in Walnut Creek, California. "Acquisitions are a key focus of our new Central to Home strategy, and we believe adding Hopewell to our portfolio will help us build scale, enter priority adjacencies and better serve consumers with more high-quality live goods offerings."

Hopewell will be a part of the Central Garden segment led by J.D. Walker, President, Garden Consumer Products. Central Garden & Pet's Brett Guthrie, Chief Operating Officer of Bell Nursery, will oversee the company's livegoods business and the day-to-day operations will continue to be run by current Hopewell employees.

The transaction is expected to close on December 31. Purchase price and other terms of the transaction were not disclosed (they never are, alas).



Here's a VIDEO about Central Garden & Pet that gives a glimpse at their brands, which include Bell, Kaytee (bird and small pet food and care), Amdro (pest control), Daconil (fungicide), Pennington (grass seed, fertilizer and more) and a whole bunch more.

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Asking “Why?”

As always, my first question is “Why? Why did Bell want to add Hopewell to its production facilities?” The man with the answers is COO Brett Guthrie, who joined Bell via Bell’s acquisition of Virginia Growers in 2008.

“Innovation, quality and value are the over-arching link that drove both this Central investment and Bell’s livegoods performance,” Brett replied via email. “This purchase will quickly complement the value that Central and Bell deliver to their consumers every day.

“Our consumers continue to appreciate and demand regionally grown livegoods whenever possible. This was an excellent opportunity to invest in strong resources: people, plants and first-class growing space that will combine with Bell’s resources and best-in-class in-store merchandising. This acquisition will drive even stronger value for our consumers.”

And why did Hopewell want to sell?

“Hopewell Nursery has been expanding and now has over 500 employees. Capital needs increase as size increases. The security of his employees and the expansion of Hopewell Nursery were Bob Ench’s top priorities. Mr. Ench was convinced that by selling to Central, he could ensure both of those goals.”

What does Bell get in the deal?

“Hopewell’s resources will immediately complement Bell’s position in Central’s livegoods portfolio while expanding availability and ensuring continuity and expansion of quality tree, shrub, rose and perennial supply for the long-term.

“We receive the highest quality plant inventory, well-maintained assets and, most importantly, an incredibly talented and passionate team that knows the livegoods space. Industry pioneer Bob Ench has always believed in the importance of people and ongoing investment in all aspects of his business. The Hopewell team will now have additional opportunities as part of the Central family—we have experienced these opportunities first-hand since Central acquired Bell in 2018; they are real and meaningful.”



How Bob started Hopewell

I asked Brett what else he could tell me about Hopewell, as (and I’m ashamed to admit this) I’d never heard of them before now. He told me that Bob Ench started Hopewell Nursery in 1988 to—get this—grow plants for a horticulturally inspired golf course complex he intended to build! The golf course project didn’t work out, but Hopewell Nursery continued to grow over the years to become a leader on the East Coast.

That's a fascinating way to enter the business, and pretty impressive to grow as big as they have since then. I think I'll put them on my "must-visit" list post-COVID.

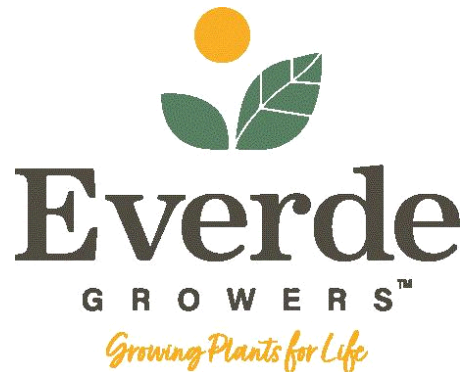


TreeTown USA's new name: Everde Growers

"Ever" and "verde" (green) ... I got what they were going for the first time I read the new name for TreeTown USA. The rebranding to **Everde Growers** was announced last week by CEO Jonathan Saperstein, who I know had been planning this for some time, to consolidate the many acquisitions he's made over the last six years since taking over the company (with his two sisters) in 2014.

"We have spent several years refining our processes, combining our policies and setting a strong foundation for the future" he said in the press release. "Now is the time to truly bring the company together as one ... Having a single brand identity will help to streamline and improve many of our processes."

"The most rewarding part of bringing our company together as one has been creating best practices across the company based on rich experiences from our various backgrounds in the industry," added Executive Vice President David Kirby. "This year, we made great strides in creating a consistent customer experience. For example, by organizing our national customer service team, our customers across the country will now have one point of contact to access our 14 farms, as well as access to an updated national availability list with a consistent look and feel. We know that executing the Everde Growers brand will take time, but our employees and customers will immediately see the benefit of having one brand identity."



TreeTown USA was founded by Jonathan's father, David, in 2001. Jonathan and his two sisters bought out dad in 2014 when he was 27. Jonathan, you may recall from **THIS** cover story I wrote about him in 2017, was named to *Forbes'* 30 Under 30 list in the Manufacturing & Industry category that year.

Headquartered in Houston, TreeT ... er, Everde Growers has 14 farms totaling more than 6,700 production acres across Texas, Florida, Oregon and California.



Correction/clarification

Last time, when taking a look at the recent USDA stats, hortistician Marvin Miller mentioned the shifting in production that was taking place in 2018, including the closing of Color Spot Nursery and the takeover of some of its assets by Altman Plants. Marvin speculated that Altman "decided

to close a number of the facilities, at least for 2019 production.”

Matt Altman noted this, and emailed me asking if he could correct that point, writing:

“When Altman Plants purchased Color Spot Nurseries, we did not close any facilities that were open in 2018. And, in fact, we have expanded production each year in the facilities that we brought into our company. We are very proud of integrating over 1,600 nursery and floriculture professionals from Color Spot into our company in late 2018 and the continued investments we’ve made to get the facilities running at full speed!”

Fair enough, Matt—and well done!



Caution: Week 1 is actually Week 53

Reader Henry Thorpe from Catoctin Mountain Growers in Maryland reminded me of something we have to watch out for every year: whether or not the Weeks in our computer calendars line up with the Weeks used by distributors when scheduling product deliveries. You know, the week before Mother’s Day is Week 18 and so on.

There are several ways Weeks can be determined, but the industry uses the ISO Week Date system, wherein the first official week of the year is the one that contains a Thursday.

“Wait, what?” you’re saying to me. “Every week contains a Thursday, you knucklehead!”

I’m talking about the first week of January. Stay with me here. Open up your calendar to January and you’ll note that January 1 falls on Friday. December 31 is Thursday. The first week in January that contains a Thursday (January 7) is the next week.

However, Microsoft Outlook (at least on my Mac) shows Week 1 as that very first week, containing Thursday, December 31 and Friday, January 1. That’s incorrect. That should be Week 53 of 2020.

Unfortunately, there’s no way to fix this (at least in Outlook for Mac; perhaps you can for a PC?).

If your Outlook doesn’t show the Weeks, go to preferences/calendar and click the setting for it.

BTW, January 7 is National Bobblehead Day. Ellen and I always toast each other.



Mitchell’s poinsettia trial

The doggone pandemic prevented Jim and Judy Mitchell and company from having an actual poinsettia “Open House,” but they did have customers and employees vote for their favorite red, white, pink and novelty during Open House Week between November 29 and December 8. Judy gave each first-place vote 5 points, second place 4 points, etc., to come up with the favorites. Which are:

Red

1. Christmas Mouse (Selecta One)
2. Burning Ember (Dümmen Orange)
3. Christmas Feelings Merlot (Selecta One)

White

1. Princettia White (Suntory)
2. Frozen (Dümmen Orange)
3. J'Adore White Pearl (Dümmen Orange)

Pink

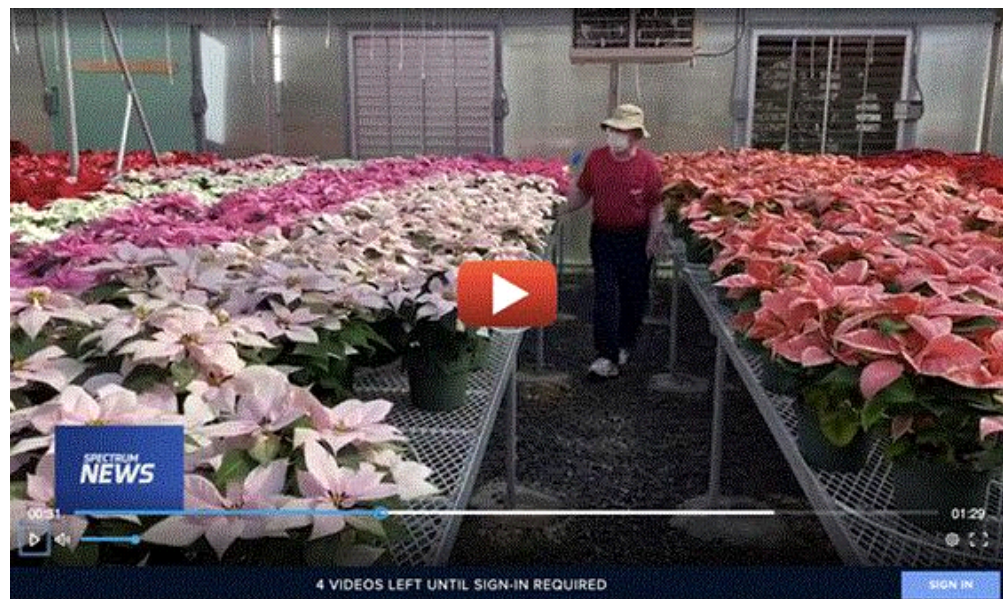
1. Princettia Queen Pink (Suntory)
2. Luv U Pink (Dümmen Orange)
3. J'Adore Hot Pink (Dümmen Orange)

Novelty

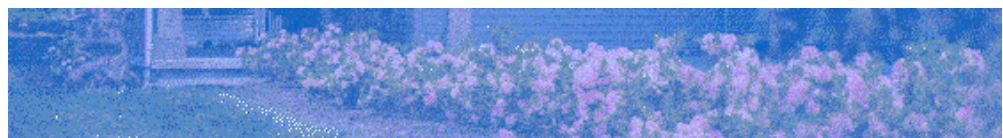
1. Sky Star (Selecta One)
2. Ice Punch (Dümmen Orange)
3. Superba New Glitter (Selecta One)

And the **overall favorites** based on the vote tally?

1. Princettia White
2. (tie) Christmas Mouse, Sky Star
3. Frozen



HERE is a nice local news piece on the trial. (Judy does a great job turning her poinsettias into local news coverage. That's Jim behind the mask.)



The hybrids are popular

Notice anything about the favorites? Folks sure do like the euphorbia hybrids—Princettias, Luv U

Pink and J'Adore (pictured here at the Heimos trial I visited in November).



The funny thing is, when hybrids were first introduced by Ecke way, way back, they did everything they could to position them for any holiday BUT Christmas. It's the reason they called them euphorbias instead of poinsettias. Oh, well.



Welcome GCG's Partners for Success

I'm proud to announce that we have a new sponsor for our *Green Profit* Young Retailer Award—The Garden Center Group, along with their eight "Partners for Success": Ball Seed, Epicor Software Corporation, First Editions Shrubs & Trees, Monrovia Nursery, Prides Corner Farms, Proven Winners, Star Roses & Plants and The Espoma Company. Welcome aboard, everybody! You're helping support a great cause: the celebration of young (under-35) professionals who have chosen our industry for their career.

Speaking of which, consider nominating a hardworking, passionate, creative, innovative under-35 professional (it might be you!) for the 2021 *GrowerTalks*/The HC Companies Young Grower Award or the 2021 *Green Profit*/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award.



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Candidates for these awards must be under the age of 35 by July 2021 and reside within the United States or Canada. The nomination process is simple. Click the links below to fill out the nomination forms.

<http://www.growertalks.com/YoungGrower/>

<https://www.greenprofit.com/YoungRetailer/>

The nomination deadline is March 1, 2021.

Thanks to all of the sponsors for making these awards possible.



Remember, be positive, but test negative!

Chris Beytes
Editor
GrowerTalks and Green Profit

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Thanks to my loyal sponsors, who help me reach the 22,191 readers of *Acres Online* in 66

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