

fc*i*

FloraCulture International

WWW.FLORACULTUREINTERNATIONAL.COM

JULY-AUGUST 2021

PUBLISHED BY



AIPH

THE AUTONOMOUS
GREENHOUSE

The one every
grower is
talking about

RECOVERY IS
IN THE AIR

Florca sees
sharp rebound
in demand

DIAMOND
CELEBRATIONS

The American
Floral Endowment
turns 60

ORCHID INSPIRATION DAYS

Europe's premier vehicle for launching new
orchid varieties and marketing initiatives



**Also your supplier
for hardy ferns!**

Vitro Plus B.V.

P.O. Box 1

4328 ZG Burgh-Haamstede

The Netherlands

Tel. +31 111 468088

sales@vitroplus.nl

Osmocote 5.
Small
granule,
big
impact.



The next generation controlled release fertilizer.

Discover the latest innovation from the Osmocote Green Lab: Osmocote 5. Building on years of research and development, this next generation controlled release fertilizer helps growers create the strongest, healthiest, highest quality plants. Thanks to the OTEA-system and NutriMatch-Release technology, plants are greener, stronger and more resilient.

Learn everything about Osmocote 5 at
smallgranulebigimpact.com

LIFE RETURNS CLOSER TO NORMALITY THIS SUMMER

Wednesday 2 June 2021 marked a special day for those active in the world of Dutch ornamental horticulture. For more than 14 months, their calendar had featured only cancelled and postponed events. But now, with crucial Covid lockdown changes in place, growers, wholesalers and plant marketeers were finally able to meet in person at the small scale Decorum Spring Fair again.

Six weeks earlier, the 23rd edition of Hortiflorexpo IPM Shanghai spared no expense to produce a horticultural trade show on a grand scale, while in the US, WF&FSA's Floral Distribution Conference was the nation's first post-pandemic floral event.

The coronavirus pandemic is having and will continue to have an impact on the events industry in the months to come. But life returns closer to normality than in the early summer of 2020 with trade shows such as Green is Life Poland (2-4 September 2021), FlowersExpo Russia (14-16 September) and the Flower and Plant Show Turkey (11-13 November 2021) having confirmed their dates.

This year's FlowerTrials primarily moved to a virtual environment, showcasing hundreds of existing varieties and even more new introductions of annuals, perennials and gourmet vegetables. However, several companies decided to organise an Open House event. FCI gladly accepted Syngenta's invitation to attend their Open House, which, pandemic or not, was filled to the brim with spectacular new varieties. Page 38.

The Orchid Inspiration Days allowed us to sample sentiments in the trade. Bedding plant and houseplant growers mostly agree that with the summer vacation around the corner and the hospitality and leisure industry reopening in many European countries, prices have become more reasonable. There are even signs that supermarkets once again have started to bargain prices down. By contrast: in the summer of 2020, the market stayed buoyant.

In addition, the pandemic has lured novice gardeners and home decorators. The most significant challenge the industry faces is to hold on to these new customers and continue to meet their needs. This topic came up in our recent houseplant webinar. [Click here](#).

The news from the Dutch Orchids Inspiration Days is that for 2020, Royal FloraHolland reports €4,45 million (-6.2 per cent) in overall potted orchid sales (120 million pieces which equal an 11 per cent decrease from 2019). There are probably two reasons for this. Already pre-Covid, orchids production in Europe had reached saturation point as it faced increasingly fierce competition from green foliage plants. Secondly, the coronavirus pandemic shook the European orchids market from the onset, with auction clocks in free fall and a significant amount of orchids composting.

Royal FloraHolland calculated that in 2020 between four and five million pieces of potted phalaenopsis 'went missing' in the market: either they ended up in the landfill or had their spikes cut back to delay their harvest for 30 weeks. As a result, the auction's average price for a single potted phalaenopsis in 2020 spiked to €3,65, increasing six per cent from 2019. Read the full report on the Dutch orchid industry starting page 14.

Ron van der Ploeg





COVER STORY

- 14 ORCHID INSPIRATION DAYS**
Europe's premier vehicle for launching new orchids varieties and marketing initiatives

FEATURES

- 22 THE AUTONOMOUS GREENHOUSE**
Even the very conservative are enthusiastic about this one
- 24 CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF FREESIA EXCELLENCE**
'Without Unicum there wouldn't have been any Dutch freesias left on the market today'
- 30 IT'S FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR FLEUROSELECT**
The Fleuroselect brand, and its products, is increasingly marketing itself via online services
- 32 FOUR BEST IPM PRACTICES TO SAFEGUARD ROSES AGAINST FALSE CODLING MOTH INFESTATIONS**
Growers can combine targeted and effective early intervention controls to break the pest's lifecycle
- 34 RECOVERY IS IN THE AIR FOR FLORCA**
Exporting flowers by aeroplane is on the rise
- 38 STAND-IN FLOWER TRIALS**
Syngenta's petunias allow industry peers to have some fun during alternative 'FlowerTrials'
- 40 DIAMOND CELEBRATIONS FOR THE AMERICAN FLORAL ENDOWMENT (AFE)**
An industry is only as strong as those that support it
- 46 THERE IS ONLY ONE NEVADA FERN**
Since its discovery twenty years ago 'Nevada' continues to revolutionise the global fern industry
- 48 THE USA'S FIRST POST-PANDEMIC FLORAL EVENT**
Nearly 500 gather to reconnect at WF&FSA's 2021 Floral Distribution Conference
- 50 AIPH PLANT HEALTH SURVEY REPORT**
Revealing the promise of a bio-secure future

VOICES

- 04 FROM THE EDITOR**
- 09 PAYING HOMAGE TO THE DUTCH AUCTION CLOCK**
- 23 PBR IN RELATION TO HARVESTED MATERIAL**
- 28 PROUD OF BEING PART OF THE FLORICULTURAL INDUSTRY**
- 33 SOUNDING THE ALARM FOR PLANT HEALTH**

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 06 WORLD NEWS**
- 10 VIS-À-VIS**
- 43 THE GREEN CITY POST**

FloraCulture International (FCI) is an independent trade magazine with the largest circulation for a world publication of its kind. FCI is published for the ornamental horticulture industry by the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH). It is published eleven times per year worldwide. **Editorial Team:** John Bijl, Spence Gunn, Ruud Knorr, Jaap Kras, Ralf Lopian, Hannah Pinnells, Ron van der Ploeg, Lisbeth Riis, Claire Shaddick, Audrey Timm, Fred van Tol, Rachel Wakefield, Lauren Yu. **Contact:** info@floracultureinternational.com. **Address:** FloraCulture International, Horticulture House, Chilton, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 0RN, United Kingdom. Editorial: Ron van der Ploeg, ron@floracultureinternational.com **Worldwide Advertising Office:** Angie Duffree, angie@floracultureinternational.com T. +31 6 403 277 35 **Graphic design:** Aryen Bouwmeester. **Cover image:** Floricultura **Circulation Administration:** FBW Abonneeservice, Postbus 612, 3440 AP Woerden, The Netherlands. Sign up now for a free digital subscription: www.floracultureinternational.com **Publisher:** Published by AIPH ©2021 FloraCulture International magazine. All rights reserved. Publisher is not liable for the content of the advertisements. Photography by permission of copyright owners.

The AIPH International Grower of the Year (IGOTY) Awards 2022 opens for entries

The International Grower of the Year (IGOTY) Awards 2022, organised by the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH), is now open for entries. The award ceremony will be held in January 2022 alongside IPM Essen in Germany, the industry's largest international trade fair.*

AIPH welcomes entries from around the world. The IGOTY Awards, supported by Headline Partner, Royal FloraHolland, celebrate best practice and recognise the 'best of the best' in ornamentals production in five categories; finished plants and trees, young plants, cut flowers and bulbs, sustainability and inspiring business. Within each category bronze, silver and gold awards can be won. From among these categories, only one winner will be crowned the 'AIPH International Grower of the Year 2022' and receive the 'Gold Rose' - the industry's most coveted prize. In January 2020, Anthura, a worldwide specialist in



In 2020, Anthura scooped up the coveted International Grower of the Year Award.

anthuriums and orchids, was named International Grower of the Year 2020. The Netherlands-based organisation reached a unique milestone for horticulture when its research and development department sequenced and mapped the DNA of orchids and Anthuriums. The company has since invested in infrastructure, technology and people to translate this breakthrough into a more sustainable production of anthuriums and orchids.

The awards judging panel commented: "Anthura is a role model for all of us. They have managed to be the leader within the entire palette; Innovation, R&D, New Tech, Sales & marketing, environment and HR." Candidates can enter the IGOTY Awards 2022 online and entry closes on Friday 10th September 2021. Judging will then take place by a panel of industry experts who will access the entrants on five key criteria; economic performance, innovation,

market insight, sustainability and human resources policy. From the entries, a shortlist will be selected. All winners will be announced at the IGOTY Awards ceremony in Essen in January; an event that brings together the industry for an evening of celebration. To find out more about the IGOTY Awards, visit www.aiph.org/events/igoty. For queries on entering on the awards please contact: events@aiph.org.

*SUBJECT TO COVID-RESTRICTIONS AT THE TIME OF THE EVENT

Research-backed presentations from the US Boxwood Blight Insight Group

The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) in the USA has announced a webinar series focused on 'knowing and growing' boxwood, boxwood breeding and selection for blight resistance, invasion, impact and management of box tree moth in Europe, and progress in boxwood blight management in the UK and New Zealand.

The webinar series is an initiative of the Boxwood Blight Insight Group (BBIG). This team of American scientists work together on an USDA National

Institute of Food and Agriculture – Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) project, in partnership with stakeholders and international collaborators.



This transdisciplinary team and its partners aim to safeguard this nation's #1 evergreen ornamental shrub crop—from blight disease,

thus saving an iconic plant featured in American landscapes since 1653. www.hriresearch.org/thrive-web-series

FleuroStar shines for Begonia I'CONIA Aroma Peach

Fleuroselect, the international organisation for the ornamental plants industry, is proud to announce that the FleuroStar Award 2021/22 goes to Begonia I'CONIA Aroma Peach from Dümme Orange.

Dümme Orange's Alexander van der Kaaij, Senior Product Manager Bed & Balcony and Jeroen Meeder, Sales Manager Benelux, accepted the prize from Fleuroselect Vice-President Marc Driessen, Secretary-General Sally van der Horst and Marketing & Communications Manager Ann Jennen.

Begonia I'CONIA Aroma Peach from Dümme Orange was competing against Pelargonium Estelle Appleblossom (Florensis), Petunia Fun House Potpourri (Syngenta Flowers) and Verbena Mr. LavaLava (Selecta one).

The jury stated: "I'CONIA Aroma Peach displays a true abundance of double, bi-coloured flowers, which are so elegant and charming! The excellent plant habit and subtle fragrance turn this Begonia into an outstanding eye-catcher for any terrace or garden."

Begonia hybrida I'CONIA Aroma Peach is the new scented Begonia from Dümme Orange. The many double, bi-coloured flowers in eye-catching peach

shades have a strong garden performance and are non-stop flowering for gorgeous planters and beautiful baskets. The I'CONIA series from Dümme Orange continues to portray the pinnacle of modern Begonias with shade to part-sun tolerance, excellent retail flower power and noted consumer performance.

Begonia I'CONIA Aroma Peach will receive considerable marketing back-up to turn its go-to-market strategy into a success. Contest organiser Fleuroselect will conduct a promotion campaign with international trade and social media and promote the new winner at trade fairs and industry events.

In total, over 30 professionals working in breeding, production, trade and retail evaluate each entry on point of sale attractiveness and commercial potential. Each jury member has seen the physical plants, either in person at the promotional plant displays at Syngenta Flowers or Florensis, or via one of the dedicated Zoom sessions.



Pictured left to right are Sally van der Horst, Alexander van der Kaaij, Jeroen Meeder, Heike Gronemann, Marc Driessen, Ann Jennen.



New tulip named in memory of Bucharest's former Uranus district

To mark the opening of the Palace of the Parliament gardens in Bucharest, Romania's Senate President Ms Anca Dragu and the Dutch ambassador to Romania Roelof van Ees gathered to celebrate the christening of a new 'Uranus' tulip. The tulip is named in memory of Bucharest's former Uranus district, which was bulldozed in the 1980s to make room for former dictator Ceaucescu's behemoth House of the People.

The 11-stories tall and 1,100 rooms building, designed as the nerve centre of Romania's communist government, was also the opulent residence of former dictator Ceaucescu and his wife. Today, it is the Romanian parliament. In 1984, to make room for such a large structure, the entire Uranus neighbourhood and parts of three others were razed to the ground overnight. People received notices in the morning to pack up and leave, and by noon the bulldozers arrived and started demolishing everything in sight. A total of 40,000 people were displaced, and 9,000 houses destroyed. There was no landscape design plan, the Palace's surroundings gardens remain unfinished, and for many years the landscape was somewhat of a lost cause. Until now.

Romania's Senate hired a Romanian and Dutch

landscape architect to design a garden that forms part of the surrounding landscape and architecture. This garden creates a sense of unity between the Palace and the people of Romania. It also gives a nod of appreciation to the former residents of the Uranus district.

The Senate has given its approval for the Palace of the Parliament garden master plan, which is being executed by the Urban Landscapes Romania consortium including Boomkwekerij Ebben, Molter BV, JUB Holland, Gebr. Seuren Rozenkwekerijen BV, Nophadrain, VIC Landscapes, Van Den Berk Boomkwekerijen and the Dutch bulb sector body Royal Anthos. During the first phase of the plan, vast amounts of the red 'Uranus' tulip have been planted on either side of the grand avenue that leads to the Palace.



ANVE celebrates 13th National Mediterranean Nursery Stock Day with the theme Green Cities for Europe

On 29 May 2021, ANVE, Italy's National Association of Nursery Stock Exporters, in association with the European Nursery Stock Association (ENA) and the international association of horticultural producers (AIPH) held a webinar, designed to explain how the Green Cities for Europe campaign is progressing while identifying the challenges around the provision of urban green space.

Is Italy already taking into account more urban green spaces in the design of its towns and villages and why does this matter so much? ANVE's introductory online conference detailed on the 3-year Cities for Europe campaign. This initiative is funded by CHAFAEA (EC) and stimulates the greening of public space by providing innovative ideas, information based on scientific research and technical expertise. The activities of this promotional platform focus on certain themes: wellbeing, climate, economy, biodiversity, and social cohesion. The campaign's 'executive producer' in Europe is ENA with ANVE being its 'project assistant' in Italy. Following initial comments by Sabrina Diamanti, President of the National Council of Agronomists and Professors of Forestry, other speakers too highlighted how topical the issue of green cities is. Mario Braga, President of

Italy's National College of Agricultural Experts, stressed ANVE's role in bringing together governments and city councils, horticultural producers at home and abroad, European and international trade associations, and other industry stakeholders. Giuseppe L'Abbate is a member of the Agriculture Commission of Italy's Chamber of Deputies and has always been among ANVE's strongest advocates. He has been acting as a 'trouble shooter' at Italy's agriculture ministry at the height of the coronavirus crisis last year. In the light of the new challenges posed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, L'Abbate stressed the need for future collaboration with private nurseries to support the forthcoming "greening" of the country. Jan Dieters Bruns, President of ENA (European Nurserystock Association) explained that building new and sustainable

urban green areas is the central theme of the campaign that will involve, from 2021 to 2023, 13 European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the Netherlands and Sweden). The project, co-financed by the participating Associations and the REA (European Commission's Executive Research Agency), envisages an investment of two million euros to raise the level of awareness among citizens and administrations of the environmental, economic and social benefits of green urban areas. Bernard Oosterom, President of AIPH (International Association of Horticultural Producers), highlighted the opportunities and obstacles for the construction of new urban green areas. The AIPH Green City programme leads global thinking on the successful integration of nature into the built environment. Through its many activities the association promotes the essential role of plants in creating vibrant urban areas. AIPH aims to develop an international standard for green cities, and to do this, it serves as

a focal point for green city best practice and a source of expertise. AIPH sees its Green City initiative as an important connection between many of our industry supporting programmes. The Green City principles are embedded in the International Horticultural Expos in showcasing the importance of plants in every aspect of our lives, demonstrating that green cities are better places to live and work in. Oosterom referenced the themes of AIPH-approved International Horticultural Expos: Expo 2019 Beijing in 2019 had the theme 'Live Green, Live Better'. The recently opened Expo 2021 Yangzhou, China has the theme of 'Green City, Healthy Life'. Expo 2021 Hatay – "Garden of Civilisations". Expo 2022 Floriade Almere – "Growing Green Cities", Expo 2023 Kahramanmaraş in Turkey – "Nature-Friendly City and Sensitivity", Expo 2023 Doha, Qatar – "Greening the Desert". Oosterom concluded by saying that all AIPH horticultural Expos bring a Green City legacy to host cities and surrounding regions, playing a pivotal role in regeneration and development.

CHINA

Benary expands into China

Construction of a new, China-based breeding technology centre for German plant breeder and seed firm Benary began in May 2021 with a ceremony in Xiamen during which the name of what will become China's first fully integrated floriculture industry centre was revealed. Welcome to Tangchao Horticulture Centre which translates in Chinese as 'Tang' for begonia and 'Chao' as new trends.

The new company is a joint venture of Ican Horticulture Co., Ltd. and Ernst Benary GmbH, Germany. Tangchao Horticulture will build and operate China's first integrated floriculture industry centre, including a production facility for young plants and finished plants with a capacity of over 250 mio units. Further, the joint venture will include a state-of-the-art breeding technology centre that will be led by Benary and focus especially on the development of flower varieties for the hot and humid climate. Tangchao Horticulture will cover a total area of 16 hectares of which 7.5ha of greenhouse space. Parts of it will be dedicated to a begonia competence centre, a 'Global Begonia Show', and an European novelties trial ground. According to Matthias Redlefsen, CEO of Benary, the new breeding technology centre in Xiamen plays an integral role in the company's global product development. Xiamen's suitable climate and friendly business environment gives the German family business the confidence to continuously invest in this venture. Furthermore, Tangchao Horticulture will act as an industry bridge to the West and support companies from European horticulture to expand their business activities into Southeast China.



Ruiqi Zhan, CEO of Ican Seed (very left); Matthias Redlefsen, CEO of Benary (3rd from left), Jan Kühn von Burgsdorf, Deputy General-Consul of the German General-Consulate Canton (3rd from right) together with representatives of the Chinese Flower Association and the Xiamen Government.



PAYING HOMAGE TO THE AUCTION CLOCK

Ruud Knorr is CCO of Royal FloraHolland.

In the run-up to Mother's Day, Royal FloraHolland reported a record week turnover of over 170 million euros. This achievement is partly thanks to sales through the auction clock. The average price of cut flowers went through the ceiling.

The share of Royal FloraHolland's clock sales declined in small steps in recent years to 40 per cent in 2020. But cut flowers are still, for the most part, traded on the clock. The clock share of cut flowers in terms of turnover is 60 per cent and in terms of volume 54 per cent. These figures show that the prices for cut flowers are higher on the clock than in the direct streams.

The auction clock is a unique sales instrument proving its worth day in and day out. The clock oversaw € 1.8 billion worth of turnover last year. These transactions happened via 6,300 KOA remote buying connections divided among nearly 1,500 customers. The clock as a good sales instrument is the main reason for growers' satisfaction with our services after reasonable financial settlement. The fact that 93 per cent of the growers supply the clock underlines its importance. Clock buyers even place the clock at number one. Of all buyers, 84 per cent are active on the clock. There is no better instrument for achieving optimal pricing. The success of the clock over the past hundred years is proof of that. Moreover, there is a transparent market environment where an enormous diversity of supply and demand comes together.

It is nice to see that the basic principles of the clock have remained unchanged in a hundred years. Nevertheless, it is necessary and vital to keep the clock constantly in step with the times and adjust it where necessary. The strength and vitality of the clock reflect in the adjustments that have been made over time, but especially in recent years. For example, KOA has not only ensured a considerable increase in the buying

public, but it also ensured that the auctioning could continue last year when the capacity in the auction rooms had to be drastically reduced. That was a blessing in these very challenging times.

The dynamics of the clock require that we continuously test the auction policy against practice. As soon as necessary, we tighten the excesses policy and look at the loyalty of suppliers. An excellent example of process innovation is the growing clock pre-sales (KVV). KVV has a positive effect on price formation, and therefore, clearly adds value.

Of course, the clock does not stand alone. It is, in fact, a combination of deal-making, logistics and financial settlement. The clock thus fulfils the needs of users. We also do this by improving the reliability of information about product quality and developing a sound and straightforward complaints process. These are preconditions for a well-functioning clock. Another success factor is how and to what extent we can connect to the buyer's business processes in the future. Fulfilment logistics is our answer.

We cherish the auction clock. Over time, much research has happened, and many plans have occurred. Before you change something, you have to be sure of yourself, of course. That also characterises our approach to Nationwide Auctioning. We have, for example, gained experience in the pilot project cut-Anthurium and at the Eelde location, and we opt for step-by-step implementation. We will make as many changes as possible in close consultation with growers and buyers. Nationwide Auctioning is a leap forward. We are investing everything in a good and soft landing.

Now that the summer vacation is around the corner, I am curious to see whether we can maintain a good flow. The clock will support the momentum.



Abe van Wingerden

'Balancing supply and demand to avoid a situation of oversupply'

FCI interviews Abe van Wingerden, who, alongside his brother Art, own Metrolina Greenhouses, one of the largest, single-site heated greenhouses in America. The 162 roofoed acreages, located in the Charlotte region of North Carolina, ships out more than 180 trailer loads of products for big-box retailers, mass merchandisers, home improvement chains, and retail partners, including Lowes, WalMart and Home Depot.

AUTHOR: RACHEL WAKEFIELD PHOTOS: METROLINA GREENHOUSES

As Abe's family surname suggests, he can trace his family roots to the well-known Dutch horticultural family. His father and mother, Tom and Vickie van Wingerden, set up the wholesale plant business after immigrating from Holland in 1972. This year, Abe was appointed as the USA representative for the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH). In this interview, he talks about the nearly 60-year-old business and his hopes for the future.

FCI: How would you describe Metrolina Greenhouses?

Abe van Wingerden: "We are a \$300 million, mid-size company, but we are still a family business. We believe our team is our number one asset, and we do all we can to deliver a world-class employee experience. Our core values are 'Integrity, Innovation, Safety, Work Ethic, and Quality'. We also operate with a 2030 Business plan Strategy document as our core, and this document allows all employees to know how their role fits into one or more of our four strategies. We have two locations and have about 800 full-time employees with 500 seasonal staff added in the spring. Additionally, we operate a 1,000 person service team that goes into the stores and assures the product is merchandised and displayed correctly."

What does Metrolina Greenhouse grow?

We grow around 80million plants per year in various

shapes and sizes to our three retail partners. We have seen significant growth in the last 15 years as we were only a \$70million company back in 2007. We grow mainly annuals and perennial for big-box retailers in the United States, but we also supply tropicals, veggies, trees, and shrubs for our customers."

What is the number one lesson you have learnt during this global pandemic?

"That people are our most important resource, and communication is their most important tool."

How has technology helped you keep an eye on consumer behaviour?

"The Daily Scan sales downloads from our retail partners allow us access to a treasure trove of data about our

sales. Still, the key is applying that data to make significant decisions on both replenishment and forecasting.

For example, we use data from Weather Bell to download five years to weather data by zip code to match up with the sales data. This planning allows us to say, "The last four times it was 70-degrees, and sunny

gave us an XX% increase in business. The last four times it was 62-degrees, and cloudy gave us an XX% change in business'. This analytical way of looking at the business allows us to drive a five per cent to ten per cent increase in business without growing more products and making us more efficient. We use much of this same data mining in our environmental systems in the greenhouse to know our

'PEOPLE ARE OUR MOST
IMPORTANT RESOURCE, AND
COMMUNICATION IS THEIR
MOST IMPORTANT TOOL'

Registration is open now



INTERNATIONAL GROWER OF THE YEAR 2022



AIPH

The International Grower of the Year (IGOTY) Awards 2022, organised by the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH), is now open for entries. In January 2022 at IPM Essen in Germany, the award ceremony will be held alongside the industry's largest international trade fair.*

AIPH welcomes entries from around the world. The IGOTY Awards celebrate best practice and recognise the 'best of the best' in ornamentals production in five categories; finished plants and trees, young plants, cut flowers and bulbs, sustainability and inspiring business. Within each category bronze, silver and gold awards can be won. From among these categories, only one winner will be crowned the 'AIPH International Grower of the Year 2022' and receive the 'Gold Rose' - the industry's most coveted prize.

Candidates can enter the IGOTY Awards 2022 online at www.aiph.org. Entry closes on Friday 10th September 2021. Judging will then take place by a panel of industry experts who will access the entrants on five key criteria; economic performance, innovation, market insight, sustainability and human resources policy. From the entries, a shortlist will be selected.

All winners will be announced at the IGOTY Awards ceremony in January at the IPM Fairground*, IPM Essen, which allows the industry to celebrate outstanding players and enjoy an evening of entertainment.

To find out more about the IGOTY Awards visit www.aiph.org/events/igoty. For queries on entering the awards please contact: events@aiph.org

AWARDS CATEGORIES

- Finished Plants & Trees Award
- Young Plants Award
- Cut Flowers & Bulbs Award
- Inspiring Business Award
- Sustainability Award

Entry deadline Friday 10 September 2021

www.aiph.org/events/igoty/



2020 Anthura BV,
The Netherlands



2019 Gediflora,
Belgium



2018 Ter Laak Orchids,
The Netherlands

*Subject to COVID restrictions at time of event



plants' optimal watering and temperature needs. We invest in several different technologies to drive our business. This investment is not restricted to sales technology, in-store apps, in-house robotics, or any other innovation. Bottom line, we attempt to innovate in all of the work we do each day as it is the core strategy of the company."

Ornamental horticulture has experienced one of the best years ever, there is more demand than supply, but is growing more products always the best solution?

"We look at the current sales rate as the "New normal", which is our yearly run rate. We have had 15million new gardeners enter the space in the last year, and if we only keep half of them, then our business will continue to grow. Consumers have invested a great deal of money and time in their homes the last year in the form of water features, gazeboes, outdoor living space, and other projects that are driving the need for plants annually in their yards. Even as we have "anniversaried" strong months in May and June that pandemic induced last year, we see an actual sales rate in the business this year in those months. Additionally, the work from home economy will not go back to 2019 levels and will settle at a new norm of more people working from home, which typically has led to more sales in live goods. Net, we are bullish, and we think 2020-2021 is the new baseline, but what we have effectively done as an industry is to fill the gap of supply vs demand, so the key is to maintain that so we don't get back in an over-supply situation."

Who has been your greatest inspiration in the ornamental horticultural industry?

"My Dad, Tom van Wingerden. While he did not always agree with my ideas, and I did not always agree with his, I was ALWAYS inspired by his drive and passion for this business."

All plants are shipped with maximum eye for detail.

How big is the pressure to produce more sustainably?

"I don't see it as pressure. I see it as the right thing to do because it is good for business. We have a four-tier sustainability plan for the company we have implemented and executed over the last five years.

Process 1 is our water reclamation work, where we use our roof system to reclaim millions of gallons of water each time it rains. We 100 per cent reuse/reclaim our water system and use no well or city water.

Process 2 is our chemical reliance reduction plan. We have reduced the amount of chemicals we use by 25 per cent in the last five years even as our business has been up 50 per cent.

Process 3 is our work on heating. We heat all of our facilities through bio-mass as we heat water to run through pipes in the facility to heat the product. We use no oil or natural gas in our heating process.

Process 4 is our work with all three of our major retailers to recycle plastic at stores (both trays and returned pots from consumers)and then send them back to Metrolina on the carts we were already using. A net-zero carbon footprint and we can reuse 80 per cent of what comes back."

As you step into the AIPH board as a representative for Region 4. What are you looking to achieve for the members in your area?

"My job is to represent our industry as a whole, not just a portion of it. This position will involve learning from my peers and doing all I can to gather feedback on our area's regional needs, even if they don't impact Metrolina directly. I look forward to the challenge and responsibility."



Deadheading pelargoniums inside Metrolina Greenhouses.

Upbeat mood at 2021 Dutch Orchid Inspiration Days

Pent-up demand, strong prices, vibrant colours, cool varieties, potential hot sellers and excitingly new marketing concepts. These superlatives sum up the mood at the 2021 Orchid Inspiration Days (8-11 June and 14-17 June 2021), the annual open house event of the Dutch orchid industry.

Over eight days, eleven orchid growers collaboratively opened their doors to customers to share their latest product developments and company news. One big cluster of participants resides in South Holland with five in the Westland, just west of Rotterdam, two in Aalsmeer, one in Delfgauw, south of Delft, and one in Nieuwaal in the province of Gelderland, all within a 90-minute driving distance from each other.

The Orchid Inspiration Days made their debut in June 2017 and are swiftly establishing themselves as Europe's premier vehicle for launching new orchids varieties and marketing initiatives.

OK Plant

Our first stop was OK Plant, run by second-generation husband and wife team Rob and Desiree Oltshoorn. Situated over two sites in Westland – with Naaldwijk being the epicentre of finished plant production and Maasdijk serving as young plant hub – OK Plant grows around 120,000 plants per week on a combined 8ha greenhouse space.

Sales manager Thijs van der Valk attributes 90 per cent of their turnover to potted phalaenopsis and the remainder 10 per cent to seasonal bedding plants, green foliage plants and ceramic indoor plant pots and décor. Commenting on the state of the trade, he says sales across all product categories have never been as good. In succulents and green foliage plants, Rhipsalis and Schefflera 'Luseanna' in 6cm and 9cm pots are riding the wave of popularity. In contrast, mini phalaenopsis in 9cm pots continue to be their flagship product.

The news from OK Plant is the launch of their lifestyle brand Kolibri Company under which three iconic consumer brands, Kolibri Orchids, Kolibri Greens and Kolibri Home, are coming together. Kolibri Company is about inviting customers to enjoy life to the fullest by feeling the energetic vibes of houseplants which make people feel one with nature, explains Van der Valk.

Effective January 2022, the Kolibri Orchids brand will include potted phalaenopsis in 12 cm pots, which is the most common pot size used by Dutch growers. "While it is



Mix&Match displays.



Kolibri Orchids Root, features bare-rooted phalaenopsis in white, violet, pink, yellow, and orange, which grow in water alone.



A highlight of the OK Plant show included Angelfall, in which flowers cascade down.

AUTHORS: RON VAN DER PLOEG AND LAUREN YU. PHOTOS: RON VAN DER PLOEG/SIGNIFY



Phalaenopsis 'Spider' available in three colours and featuring remarkable star-shaped, deeply incised flowers with pink spots against a creamy background.

true that we have become a household name in mini phalaenopsis orchids, we believe that by adding the popular 12cm pot size to our portfolio will help us to make even better Mix&Match displays in garden centres by using a greater variety of orchids and pots. We think it is important to have combined displays of plants and pots to give people ideas about what they can do with orchids. A good plant/pot presentation can generate up to 50 per cent more sales in garden centres if it is continuously kept tidy, ordered and well-stocked," says Van der Valk. He adds that at the time, the Mix&Match idea was born out of a gap in the market with hardly any ceramic plant pots available for their 9cm mini phalaenopsis.

Market research by product manager potted orchids, Cor Middelkoop- affectionally nicknamed 'Corchidee' of Royal FloraHolland, the world's largest trade hub for orchids, reveals that in 2017, potted orchids had a 35.4 per cent market share in the auction's houseplant segment. However, it dropped to a 26 per cent share in 2020. More specifically, potted phalaenopsis have an 88.9 per cent market share in the auction's overall potted orchid sales.

For 2020, Royal FloraHolland reports €445 million (-6.2 per cent) in overall potted orchid sales (120 million pieces which equals an 11 per cent decrease from 2019). There are probably two reasons for this.

Already pre-Covid, orchids production in Europe had reached saturation point as it faced increasingly fierce competition from green foliage plants. The revival of these plants is part of a broader trend of humans wanting to be closer to nature. Secondly, the coronavirus pandemic orchid shook the European orchid market from the onset, with auction clocks in free fall and a significant amount of orchids composting. Between week 12 to week 17 in 2020, national governments in Europe ordered garden centres, florists, week markets and street stalls to close, bringing orchid sales on the old continent almost to a complete standstill.

Royal FloraHolland calculated that in 2020 between four and five million pieces of potted phalaenopsis 'went missing' in the market: either they ended up in de landfill or had their spikes cut back to delay their harvest 30 weeks.

Ironically, Covid-19 changed the way consumers value and interact with houseplants in their lives, with many of them taking an interest in home decoration and

style. This trend explains why the rebound in the Dutch orchid industry was fast. Halfway through April 2020, when the first garden centres and florists

in Europe started to reopen, prices across all orchid categories began to soar. Eventually, Royal FloraHolland's average price for a single potted phalaenopsis in 2020 spiked to €3,65, increasing six per cent from 2019.

This price hike went hand in hand with a dramatic drop in supply volumes with 7.5 million fewer orchids changing hands through the Dutch auction clock in 2020, a 30 per cent decrease over 2019. Simultaneously, the clock price for potted orchids increased by 17.5 per cent with the availability of plants being difficult. Pot size 15cm showed the most dramatic decline in output, while in 9cm pots, production levels remained relatively stable. Judging from the many new cultivars and marketing ideas on display at the Orchid Inspiration Days, the global health crises prompted an outpouring of creativity. OK Plant, for example, put 'Dubrovnik' from Dutch breeder Anthura in the limelight. The cultivar from the company's Jewel collection has a golden background with orange stripes and a red lip. Another jewel in the crown is Phalaenopsis 'Spider' available in three colours and featuring remarkable star-shaped deeply incised flowers with pink spots against a creamy background.

Also debuting at the Dutch orchid open house was Kolibri Orchids Root, featuring bare-rooted phalaenopsis in white, violet, pink, yellow, and orange, which grow in water alone. The flowers sit in a 16cm vase with only a minimal amount of roots in the water. Van der Valk ensures that for this concept only those cultivars with sufficient spikes and trunk roots have been selected to guarantee a shelf life which equals bark-grown orchids. Other highlights of the OK Plant show included Angelfall, in which flowers cascade down, and Halo, in which patient workers train three stems along an iron wire in a circle so that it ultimately takes the shape of a neat and round bouquet.



In Halo, patient workers train two stems along an iron wire in a circle so that it ultimately takes the shape of a neat and round bouquet.

Ter Laak Orchids

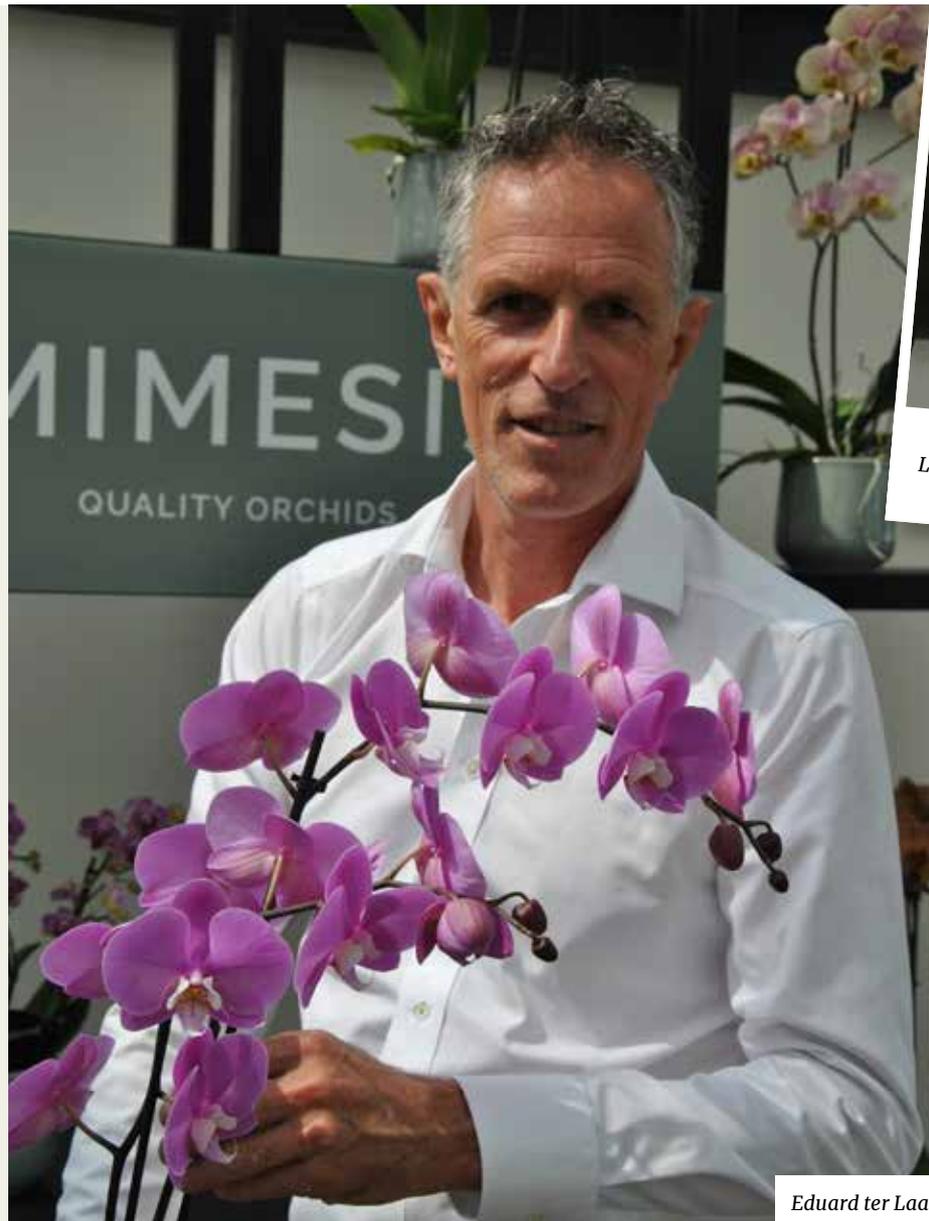
At Ter Laak Orchids, crowned AIPH International Grower of the Year in 2018, hi-tech and clever marketing go hand in hand.

Second-generation brothers Eduard and Richard ter Laak has been growing orchids for more than 40 years. Eduard recalls how their father founded the company in 1954 as a specialist grower of vegetables and potted plants. As a grower, Ter Laak senior always kept moving forward and doing new things, so in the 1980s, he decided to try his luck in cut cymbidium. “When he started to propagate his plants by division, he used the surplus of plants in a potted cymbidium trial. Subsequently, he purchased the inventory of a Danish greenhouse with *Paphiopedilum Leeanum*, to grow them as a cut flower and potted plant,” says Eduard.

Bitten by the orchid bug, Ter Laak introduced the first phalaenopsis in their greenhouses not much later. Ter Laak says, “We purchased our first clones from Floricultura and Arndt, the company which Anthura acquired a few years later. Subsequently we teamed up with fellow orchid growers to conduct trials exposing plants to cooler temperatures to induce the flowering process.”

In this context it is important to remember technological progress in ornamental horticulture hardly ever happens in a vacuum—growers are all in together. Revealing the secrets of cooler temperatures in potted phalaenopsis marked a real breakthrough, plus the beginning of year-round production.

In technology, the company’s pride is the five-hectare glasshouse structure in Wateringen, also known as the *DaglichtKas* (Daylight Greenhouse) and completed by Dutch builder Technokas in 2018. The greenhouse has an ingenious system that captures sunlight and transforms it into hot water.



Eduard ter Laak.

In 2018, Chris Beytes from our sister publication *GrowerTalks* described it as follows. “Double glazed glass panes are fitted with Fresnel lenses that focus the sunlight onto steel pipes suspended under the glass that have water pumping trough them. The water pipes are suspended by cables in a way that allows them to be adjusted via computer throughout the day as the sun moves, keeping them in the focus area of the Fresnel lenses. The Fresnel panes are only on the south side of the bays; the north side has double-glazed diffused glass. The north also has the only roof vents. The resulting hot (around 100F/38°C) water is stored for later use in massive tanks and even in the aquifer several hundred feet below

the greenhouse. Cool water can be stored the same way, giving Ter Laak an almost unlimited supply of hot and cold water for winter heating and summer cooling.” Eduard does not regret for a single moment that the company opted for the heat-from-sunlight system. He says, it effectively converts the sun’s energy into hot water that the Daylight Greenhouse, even with no shade paint or shade curtains, it is several degrees cooler than their standard greenhouse, which has shade. Ter Laak Orchids heralded 2021 with a bang, announcing their departure from Decorum, the growers’ alliance of which they were a member since 2002. Their decision to withdraw, left



Occupying pride of place within the Mimesis brand are Ter Laak's wholly-owned and bred line of exclusive phalaenopsis (propagated by Hark in Germany).

Decorum with 6.5 million premium phalaenopsis gap, which Ter Laak yearly marketed under the Decorum brand.

Eduard ter Laak recalls how by the end of 2017 the market struggled with oversupply, mainly in white; with a 30 per cent market share the dominating colour in potted phalaenopsis.

"Due to the global rise to prominence of green foliage plants, potted phalaenopsis is facing a strong competitor. Fortunately, there is now a better balance between supply and demand and prices have been good since Europe started to reopen in May 2020. However, the orchid market continues to be crowded and therefore we feel an-ever increasing need to differentiate ourselves with branding and premium quality, and to maintain exclusivity."

Ter Laak does not say it out loud, but maybe over the past few years the potted phalaenopsis has too quickly gone too 'mass', with lower-priced products, entry-level plants threatening the moth orchid's image of exclusivity.

The company has launched a new global lifestyle brand in orchids called Mimemis (greek for reflection) to turn the tide. Eduard ter Laak explains that the in-house brand will have five premium product lines launching initially: Mimesis Originals (tried-and-tested orchids), Mimesis Marvellous (two 4-5-spike plants combined

to produce an abundance of flowers), Muse (arty and trained phalaenopsis that seem to swirl around gently), Mimesis No7 with an homage to one of the world's famous perfume makers and includes a group of fragrant orchids, and Mimemis Spirit, including a range of relatively short-stemmed phalaenopsis with huge flowers.

Occupying pride of place within the Mimesis brand are Ter Laak's wholly owned and bred line of exclusive phalaenopsis (propagated by Hark in Germany) with 'Donau', 'Lempa', 'Rhône', 'Magdalena', and 'Ural' already enjoying recognition in the market.

For Ter Laak, exclusivity can only realistically be obtained by selling limited quantity of plants to a smaller audience, that is, the high-end garden retailer and florist. Ter Laak grows between eight-nine million potted phalaenopsis per year in 17,5ha of hi tech greenhouse space and aims at selling seven million under their new Mimesis brand. Eduard ter Laak does not exclude the brand will welcome other potted plant growers in the future.

The company grows most of its phalaenopsis in 9 and 12 cm pots, but the aim is to become the one-stop-shop for potted phalaenopsis, so 6 and 17cm pots can also be found in the company's portfolio.

Stolk Flora

Our third stop was the 6.2 ha potted phalaenopsis nursery Stolk Flora in Bleiswijk, owned and run by second-generation grower Jan Stolk. The sales and marketing manager Manon Greeve invited us to take a look at their mini orchid trolley fair.



Arc (de Triomphe) is, as you can guess, a hot seller in France.

But not before she has extensively explained that sustainability is in the company's owner DNA. He wants Stolk Flora to be an environmentally friendly orchid business to the core. Four MPS certificates plus Florimark Production are proof that Stolk Flora's green credentials are third party verified. Plus, the MPS Product Proof certification scheme provides the grower with a calculation tool to develop comprehensive and reliable inventories of possible (systemic) pesticides on their plants.

An accurate assessment of substances helps the company demonstrate to their customers – supermarket chains, florists and

wholesalers – the absence of specific active ingredients used in crop protection products and that all present substances are safe.

A giant poster stuck to the walls of the processing area explains the bigger story behind the nursery's Your Natural Orchid tagline.



The Manta More orchid stands out for its larger lip, more open and flatter blooms.



In Angel, stems are trained in a circular shape to resemble a colourful and round orchid bouquet featuring xl blooms in all colours of the rainbow.



Stolk Flora endeavours to use biodegradable packaging wherever possible, using paper and paper fibre trays instead of cellophane and poly ribbon to wrap their plants.

Growing potted phalaenopsis with respect for the planet means an optimum blend of beneficial moulds, bacteria and vitamins replacing chemicals in daily practice. Stolk Flora has also partnered with biocontrols supplier Koppert which provides swirski-mites, crypto bugs, and macro bugs to control spider mites, mealy bugs and pot worms biologically. Greeve notes that the company has



Stolk Flora's sales and marketing manager Manon Greeve extensively explained that sustainability is in the company's owner DNA.

taken a big step forward in the upgrade of its portfolio. "Only three years ago, most of our business boiled down to 2-spike plants in a 12cm pot and with a 65cm height. Since, we have hugely expanded our product range. Take Manta More, a marketing concept featuring the next generation of orchid, that is, an orchid whose blooms resemble one of the most graceful fish in our seas: Manta rays. The Manta More orchid stands out for its larger lip, more open and flatter blooms. Levoplant, Anthura and Ter Laak form the creative team behind this orchid breeding breakthrough for which Stolk Flora has been granted exclusivity. Manta More debuted in the tumultuous spring of 2020 with some hesitating sales in the beginning which quickly rebounded. We explain our customers that Manta More will help them to drive their orchid sales. Manta More orchids as such should be able to yield an additional 20 cent price for us," says Greeve.

Another unusual offering in phalaenopsis is Stolk Flora's Arc (de Triomphe). The 2-spike plant's unstaked and budded stems (ideally the bud is the size of a marble) are trained along a curved wire with the stem attached with twist ties every few centimeters. Greeve notes the technique is time-consuming and requires a six-week lead time and therefore command a premium price. This process also applies to hand-trained Angel orchids in which stems are trained in a circular shape to resemble a colourful and round orchid bouquet featuring xl blooms in all colours of the rainbow. On a coffee table, Angel, only standing 30cm tall, is a real eye-catcher. Moreover, it comes in a trendy plant pot: white and smooth or hued with subtle decoration. Stolk Flora endeavours to use biodegradable packaging wherever possible, using paper and paper fibre trays instead of cellophane and poly ribbon to wrap their plants.

Inca Orchids

The Orchidaceae family comprises around 750 genera, almost 20,000 species and many thousands of more hybrids. With the 88.9 market share phalaenopsis is having at the Dutch auction, one would nearly forget that in potted orchids something different exists. A stop at Nootdorp-based Inca Orchids helps to put things into better perspective.

The company, run by second-generation husband and wife team André and Carolien van der Goes (the latter previously worked for Dümme Orange and currently works for Syngenta Flowers), grows cambria, miltonia, brassia, oncidium, zygopetalum, miltoniopsis, colmanara, burrageara, bratonia and beallara.

Speciality orchids – also known as niche type or orchids miscellaneous- are far from playing a subservient role. At Royal FloraHolland this group of orchids represented €45 million in sales (-11 per cent) and 11 million traded plants (-10.7 per cent) in 2020.

Lower supply volumes in 2020 led to an average price of 4.27 euro, up 0.5 per cent from 2019.

Orchid miscellaneous has a ten per cent share in overall potted orchid sales, which means that out of ten potted orchids, nine are phalaenopsis, and and



Left to right René Tas, Luiza Gawrysiak and André van der Goes.

one is a speciality orchid. Playing a prominent role at Inca Orchids' Open House was Bouquesh, an orchid mix in a 17cm pot (with the allure of a orchid bouquet) combining the bold, bright colours of Oncidium, Zygopetalum, and several types of Cambria.

Another show stopper included Odontoglossum 'Renaissance White' featuring xl blooms in creamy white with dark red markings. Zygopetalum Impasto Blue's primary flower shades are purple and blue, which is a highly-sought after colour in orchids. The lavishly flowering Grand Sapa is a lavishly flowering cambria in a 17cm pot, also known as the King of the Andes, and makes the ideal indoor and outdoor orchid.

Situated across two locations in Nootdorp, Van der Goes was previously

a bell pepper grower, who was not always happy with the mass market aspect of the Dutch vegetable business. That's why in 2007, he started growing the more rare orchids, which can be both an exciting but also a very challenging job. Speciality orchids are much more difficult to 'tame' in a pot and represent a world on their own.

Inca Orchids dislikes being constantly compared to phalaenopsis growers as their product is an entirely different range of orchids.

Inca Orchids' main products are in 9cm and 12cm pots; France is the biggest market for the company. The country accounts for 40 per cent of its sales. Inca Orchids also has a line of scented orchids. When asked about the shelf life of fragrant orchids compared to non-fragrant ones, sales managers Luiza Gawrysiak and René Tas said



Among Inca Orchids 'line of fragrant orchids Odontoglossum naevium is Luiza Gawrysiak's favourite as it has a heavenly scent.



Odontoglossum 'Renaissance White' features xl blooms in creamy white with dark red markings.



Grand Sapa is a lavishly flowering cambria in a 17 cm pot suited as indoor and outdoor orchid.

they did not observe much difference. On average, all their products have around 12 weeks of shelf life depending on the variety.

Contrary to what is seen in phalaenopsis production, Inca Orchids does not boast state-of-the-art techniques as most of their varieties are not grown year-round with the usual exceptions to the rule.

Although, it is a challenge to supply what customers desire, the solution is an orchid mix. The mix is being carefully selected to meet the aesthetic value and quality standard.

René shows FCI how Inca Orchids comply with sustainable production. They use pots made from consumer- recycled plastic, resulting in 40 per cent less plastic use. Pest control is biological and the orchid nursery uses 100 per cent water recycled water.

The business was severely hit when the Coronavirus pandemic started on week 12, leaving four weeks with no sales. The company's sales picked up two weeks later than phalaenopsis, which is still one of the most familiar plants to consumers. When asked about what variety Luiza loves most, she said it varies day per day because you never know what will flower next.



Bouquesh is a luxury line of orchid 'bouquets' combining the bold, bright colours of Oncidium, Zygopetalum, and several types of Cambria in a 17cm pot.



An absolute first is Zygopetalum Impasto Blue, whose primary flower shades are purple and blue; a highly-sought after colour in orchids.

De Hoog Orchids

Hoog Orchids grows around two million potted dendrobium nobilé per year on a combined greenhouse space of 5ha. In placing these figures into context, it is helpful to know that the Netherlands hosts three dendrobium nobilé growers. These include De Hoog Orchids, Bos Flowers&Orchids, and Wooning Orchids. The latter is to suspend their dendrobium production now that the new owner, Green'05, has decided to focus on potted phalaenopsis only. De Hoog Orchids and Bos Flowers&Orchids combined growth output is approximately three million dendrobium nobilé plants per year on 7.5ha of greenhouse space. De Hoog Orchids maintains the distinction of being the Dutch dendrobium nobilé industry's largest supplier.

Royal FloraHolland figures provide even more context: in speciality orchids the auction reported €45 million in sales (-11 per cent) and 11 million traded plants (-10.7 per cent) in 2020. In the

auction's potted orchid miscellaneous range, dendrobium nobilé has the largest market share (30 per cent).

The De Hoogs have deep roots in horticulture which go back to 1928 when the great-grandpa of today's owners Marco and Arjan de Hoog started to grow roses, carnations, freesias, and much later also strelitzias, and cut cymbidium. From 1990 onwards, the company is a specialist supplier of a diverse range of potted dendrobium nobilé. Miniature dendrobium, for example, comes in a 9cm pot, more standardised plants in 12cm pot. In comparison, a dendrobium nobile 'mini garden' combines three lavishly flowering plants in a 21 cm pot, a hot seller among high end florists in Italy and France.

De Hoog Orchids is keen to stay at the forefront of business innovation with Appolon Bow, including stem-trained plants into graceful arches. Currently, De Hoog Orchids' portfolio comprises tried-and-tested Appolon



The De Hoogs have deep roots in horticulture which go back to 1928 when the great-grandpa of today's owners Marco and Arjan (pictured) de Hoog started to grow roses, carnations, freesias, and much later also strelitzias, and cut cymbidium.

(white), Akatsuki (purple), Bright Eye (pink with the bright centre), Kumiko (soft pink with a subtle creamy centre), and 'Sunny Eye' (pearly white flowers with pink edges and dark centre). The news from De Hoog Orchids is the arrival of a new golden yellow cultivar. Welcome to Songbird as the substitute of Sunny Bird Shine Day which not always proved reliable in cultivation and blooming.

Apart from sourcing their tissue culture young plants directly from their trusted partner Floricultura, Arjan and his father Nico also carry out several dozens of crossings per year. Their latest breeding breakthrough – still under number- is a perfectly shaped and abundantly flowering cultivar, that in the long run, will replace the purple Akatsuki. In addition, the De Hoog brothers frequently visit and liaise with breeders around the world and travel to Chinese Tapei and Hawaii to bring new blood into their gene pool.

During one of these business meetings, they came across one of the most fragrant orchids: *rhynchotylis gigantea* (foxtail orchid). The specimen orchid



Nimble fingers train dendrobium stems along an iron wire.

has between 15 to 50 blooms on each flower spike, and its fragrance is powerful and flowery. The holy grail in dendrobium nobilé continues to be a bold orange cultivar. In its natural habit in Southeast Asia, there are several orange specimens, but none of them is suited to be tamed under greenhouse circumstances. An important lesson to learn: always be wary of blue dendrobiums: orchids do not naturally produce true-blue flowers. So, when you come across blue dendrobiums they are dyed blue. De Hoog Orchids is not a massive fan of them. De Hoog Orchids has a sustainable marketing message. There are 5,000 solar panels mounted on the roofs of the company's packing sheds, the LED lighting used in their three-tier cool chamber (used to establish flower buds) and their heat pump that generates both warm and cold water to heat and cool the

greenhouse. Over the years, the company has become a household name for strong and healthy dendrobium nobilé but company prestige can come with many unanticipated challenges. The fight against



And this is the final result many weeks later.

dreaded pests such as thrips and spider mite is not easy due to diminishing chemical options. Thrips ranks without any doubt among the pest most difficult to eradicate with biocontrols as *Transeius montdorensis*, *Orius* and *Amblyseius swirskii* not always giving the best value for money as after administering them to the crop they are not always easy to trace. *Phytoseilus persimilis*, in turn, proves more efficient to control spider mites. Cultivating dendrobium nobilé is not for the faint-hearted. Crop times are longer than in phalaenopsis, while lighting, cooling and relative humidity require full attention. That's why De Hoog Orchids is not happy how garden retailers display their high-end products. More than often, they see that the glossy, linear leaves and the distinctive tropical blooms of dendrobium remain hidden behind plastic when garden centres do not take the effort to unpack plants. Also, the De Hoog family thinks there is a world to win on the retail floor with the right pot and plant mix.

In comparison with phalaenopsis, the plant's higher pricing may also be an issue. But the good news for the company is that the coronavirus pandemic has caused a price hike in phalaenopsis while dendrobium prices remained more or less stable, bridging the price gap between both type of orchids.

Over the past 15 years, new greenhouse space and land purchase have provided the resources to grow and invest in modern technology and marketing. Five years ago, the company launched its premium brand Florallure including the cream of the dendrobium crop with a minimum of twenty clusters of blooms per plant, a minimum 50cm stem height and lush green foliage opposite each cluster. Between 20 to 30 per cent of plants currently sell under Florallure.



The company's fitted its three-tier cool chamber with LED lighting to establish flower buds.



The company uses paper and paper fibre trays to wrap their plants.



De Hoog Orchids' latest breeding breakthrough – still under number- is a perfectly shaped and abundantly flowering cultivar, that in the long run, may replace the purple Akatsuki.

The autonomous greenhouse, the one, every grower is talking about

Getting the best from your crop will, in future, become more the computer's responsibility as autonomous growing looks set to relieve producers of some of the day-to-day decisions about steering the greenhouse climate.

AUTHOR: CLAIRE SHADDICK

Addressing a session of GreenTech's online conference in October 2020, Delphy Digital cultivation engineer Klaas van Egmond said advances in autonomous growing were being driven by the increasing demand for fresh food and flowers. "Over the next five years, the greenhouse sector worldwide is expected to grow by 50 per cent."

DATA-DRIVEN GROWING

With more than half of all growers in Europe older than 55, that prediction will be difficult to fulfil with fewer managers and less knowhow available in the industry



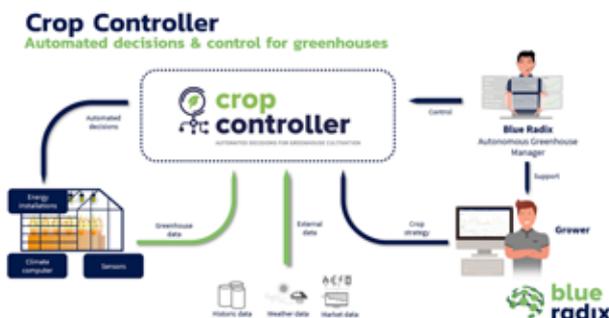
The autonomous greenhouse.

without the help of data-driven growing. "Currently growers receive all the data from climate computers and energy installations, and historical and weather data, as charts but have to interpret and make decisions on them," said Ronald Hoek, CEO of Blue Radix which specialises in artificial intelligence for the greenhouse industry. With autonomous growing, they don't have "to spend a lot of time in the greenhouse, walking around and pushing the buttons of a climate computer, but can think about the changes and innovation they want to add to their crop strategy, to improve it."

WATCHING OVER YOUR SHOULDER

The conference heard how far Dutch companies such as Blue Radix

and Delphy Digital have advanced with their computer models for autonomous growing. Both use historical data and current crop, climate and weather readings alongside a crop strategy, which stipulates what a grower wants to achieve in terms of production. "The strategy is important because it sets the parameters you have to work to," said Hoek. The optimal climate is shaped by the collected data and translated by algorithms into setpoints which are recalculated every five minutes. "Algorithms use all of the data to make the best possible decisions on climate and energy usage," he said. Each company offers the autonomous growing model as a service, which includes continuous monitoring by off-site operators who, said Hoek, 'watch over your shoulder'.



Crop controller.



PBR IN RELATION TO HARVESTED MATERIAL

Mia Buma is Novelty Protection Advisor to AIPH.

DUTCH-RUN COMPETITION

Delphy's model is already in operation in tomato and cucumber crops in the Netherlands, England, Austria, Japan, China and the Middle East and the company is working on a version for chrysanthemum production. The Blue Radix model, Crop Controller, has been installed on several production nurseries in the Netherlands, the USA, Mexico, Canada and Czech Republic. Both companies have shown what their models can do in the autonomous greenhouse challenge, the Dutch-run competition which invites five teams to grow a greenhouse crop remotely, their results compared with conventional production where the decisions are made by people. "The results were astonishing," said Van Egmond. "In 2019/20, all five autonomous teams beat the human growers and showed the potential that data-driven systems have in controlling greenhouses in a smart way."

GOOD QUALITY DATA ARE PARAMOUNT

Van Egmond pointed out that the models depend on good quality data which can sometimes be a problem. "Without being present, we still need to know every corner of the greenhouse, how the crop is performing and how the crop environment is. Right now that's a big part of the grower's job. How do we tackle that when we're not on site but still need to have a complete view of the crop and its environment?" Too few sensors in the greenhouse can be unrepresentative of the whole crop, he said, while relying on manual measurements risks inconsistency.

MAIN ADVANTAGES

As well as higher production and reduced costs, Van Egmond said one of the main advantages of data-driven growing was that growers could safely oversee larger areas of protected production. "Someone who can maybe manage 10 or 20ha is, with autonomous growing, able to do so with 100 or 200ha," he said.

However, Hoek acknowledged it takes trust for growers to relinquish some of their role. "But [even] very conservative growers we know get very enthusiastic about the system because it shows them a completely new way of operating," he said.

AIPH's Novelty Protection Group advocates fair and robust plant breeders' rights (PBR), thereby encouraging innovation and rewarding quality so that growers can reap the benefits of their work. Mia Buma advises AIPH on the latest developments and contributes significantly to our ability to keep AIPH members informed and represented. This brief outline of recent activities shows the importance of this group and the influence that AIPH has in this sector.

On 27 May, the UPOV digital seminar on the breeder's right in relation to harvested material took place. The convention contributed to a better understanding of the main principles of the breeder's right. In summary, there were three points of focus.

1. How does the lack of effective protection on the harvested material impact growers and consumers?

Evidence was presented at the seminar that the lack of effective protection for new varieties of fruit trees before the grant of breeders' rights could inhibit the early introduction of new and improved varieties, thus reducing the benefits of those varieties for growers and consumers and, therefore, society as a whole. Furthermore, if breeders do not have adequate protection to recover the investment in breeding, improved varieties might not be developed at all.

2. What are the main challenges in exercising the breeder's right concerning harvested material?

A common area of concern is the lack of predictability concerning the breeder's right to the harvested material.

For certain species, trees, once planted, can produce fruits for many years. Therefore, a minimum scope of provisional protection and a narrow interpretation of "unauthorised use of propagating material" may not provide the means for the breeders to exercise and enforce their right concerning the growth of the plants and producing and selling of the fruit.

3. At the level of UPOV: what solutions do you see for those challenges in the exercise of the breeder's right concerning the harvested material?

Clear indication from presentations and discussions that guidance in the explanatory notes on harvested material would benefit further clarification.

Mr Tjeerd Overdijk, who was proposed by AIPH (and accepted by the UPOV-staff) to be one of the seminar speakers, made it clear to the attendants that the text of Convention 1991 provides sufficient basis for such amendment of the Explanatory Notes (EXN) on harvested material. Better protection for the breeder in unfair situations, achieved by formulating more valuable and clearer EXN's, would be supported by AIPH.

For more in-depth information on novelty protection, join the AIPH Novelty Protection Sparring Partner Group (SPG). The SPG receives detailed notes and updates about novelty protection and has the opportunity to contribute to formal AIPH responses to matters arising. Contact Audrey Gerber, Technical Advisor to AIPH, for more information audrey.gerber@aiph.org



Celebrating 25 years of freesia excellence

Unicum, a Dutch freesia growers' group, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. FCI sat down with Unicum chairman and freesia grower René van Dijk to talk about these fragrant flowers and celebrate the alliance's joint success and achievements.

Twenty five years ago, Unicum was one of the first Dutch grower groups to serve their (retail) customers better. To date, the growers alliance includes eleven growers and is widely known as Europe's one-stop-shop for quality freesias supported by a staff of dedicated sales people and a bespoke bouquet handling service.

ECONOMIES OF SCALE AND AMBITION

Naaldwijk-based Freesia grower René van Dijk is a long-time Unicum member and is the group's current chairman. He took over his father freesia nursery in 1988. "My dad's curiosity led him to do revolutionary things such as using artificial lighting and groundcover. But his ideas were also born out of frustration as he could not always cope with an 'untameable' freesia, the vagaries of the weather and fluctuating harvests. It was always amazing to see how his growing techniques and technology often paid off in as little as 12 months." While Van Dijk senior, who still enjoys his daily walks around his son's nursery, was one of the foremost 'freesia-culturists' of his time, the one thing he failed to do was expand his business to benefit from the economies of scale. "Ideally, a freesia nursery occupies 4ha. When I took over the reigns from my father, the company was 7,000m² and it is now 18,000m². In terms of growth strategy, I was lagging behind, but I am now catching up a great deal," says Van Dijk adding that in the past, the Dutch freesia industry has



Naaldwijk-based Freesia grower René van Dijk is a long-time Unicum member and is the grower group's current chairman.

seen the rise and fall of the 10ha freesia king, who, in the absence of necessary capital, good workforce and planning quickly lost his crown. "The thing is in freesias you use staggered planting, each time you plant a greenhouse section the whole growing process starts over again with each variety having its complicated culture requirements. By doubling in size a grower might easily be tempted to grow a much wider range of colours. Then the risk is that you start focusing too much on your plant material – the corms you need to reuse multiple times – instead of putting your energy in finishing your cut flower crop."

IT IS NO JOB FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED

Van Dijk acknowledges that growing freesias is not a job for the faint-hearted. "But we have developed a mindset orientated toward solving routine problems. The planting of the different varieties in succession

has brought much calm as it allows us to keep our corm inventory manageable." Strict production schedules also help Van Dijk guarantee a reliable supply of quality flowers in the volumes that buyers on the day-to-day market require.

UNTAPPING RETAIL DEMAND

In commemorating Unicum's Silver jubilee, Van Dijk says the grower's alliance has been instrumental in advancing and servicing the retail trade in freesias. However, it was far from a shiny start 25 years ago. Van Dijk recalls, "The freesia market was in the doldrums with supply exceeding demand and the retail market remaining untapped. Only a handful of retail growers had tried their luck in servicing UK retail without any remarkable success. Product volumes were too heavily fluctuating, and stems were either too short or too long, flowers were either immature or too mature. Unicum's purpose was to join forces to understand the retail customer's needs better. Also, we wanted to empower freesia growers while generating a sustainable, reliable and sizeable year round supply of premium flowers for the mass market.

"I have always had an enquiring mind, eager to know more about my customers and receive product feedback. And I did not need to

UNICUM GROWERS

Unicum growers include:

- P.D. Lievaart & Zn (Naaldwijk)
- M.C. Zwinkels & Zn (Poeldijk)
- Van Os Freesia (Naaldwijk)
- Zandvoort Flowers (Huissen)
- Zeestraten (Oosterhout)
- VOF Barendse ('s-Gravenzande)
- Mol Freesia (Nibbixwoud)
- René van Dijk (Naaldwijk)
- Tesselaar Freesia (Heerhugowaard)
- Hofland Oranjepolder (Maasdijk)
- M.C. Hofland ('s-Gravenzande)

think twice about joining also because I wanted more security of orders within my company. In the early days, I sold 15 per cent of flowers through Unicum and 85 per cent through the auction clock. Over the years, Unicum's share in my business has grown to 65 per cent. Among today's members are growers who sell 70 or even 100 per cent of their flowers through Unicum."

THE DECLINE OF PRODUCTION

Since its inception on 29 February 1996, Unicum strives to supply each market segment with a bespoke product portfolio. Today, Unicum's production volume – 65 million freesia stems per year– remains almost unchanged, the alliance's membership and acreage decreased dramatically to 13 from 23, and 26 hectares from 55 hectares.

Van Dijk freely admits, "The prospect of further production declines is a cause for serious concerns as they risk putting the order fulfillment process under too much pressure. If your group of growers are too small, others can no longer jump in to help with completing orders."

The freesia grower cites several reasons for the stark decline in membership. "Eighty per cent of growers that retired did not have a potential successor, only two withdrew because they wanted to directly sell to the wholesale business, and one swapped freesia for lisianthus."

Van Dijk attributes 65 per cent of total Dutch freesia production



To date, growers' alliance Unicum includes eleven growers and is widely known as Europe's one-stop-shop for quality freesias supported by a staff of dedicated sales people and a bespoke bouquet handling service.

volumes to Unicum members, 50 per cent of total Dutch acreage. "To my knowledge, there is not any grower's group representing such extensive production areas. In mini gerberas and chrysanthemums, for example, this is between 20 and 30 per cent. While in potted plants, Decorum was the country's first grower's group, and Unicum was the first to include cut flowers."

A UNIFYING INDUSTRY VOICE

In the 25 years of Unicum's history, Van Dijk wants to pay tribute to his mentor and Unicum's founding father, Ton van der Houwen. "He has been a focus for unity with the group's diverse community of growers and customers. Unity is 'no walk in the park' because the question of how to distribute retail orders in an equitable way among all members has more than once spiked fiery debates," admits Van Dijk. He adds, "This unity was needed, especially when prices on the day-to-day market were under pressure and each of use was eager to have a year round deal. Fortunately, there is much more togetherness within Unicum which can largely be attributed to the quatum system, created six years ago. This system gives a maximum annual volume per colour and grower, and this has brought much calm among members. Even among those who grow red and pink varieties known for producing fewer stems per m² and quicker ageing corms. We deduct a small amount

from white and yellow best sellers to compensate for the additional costs these growers face."

THE NEED TO HIRE YOUNGER TALENTS

Van Dijk is delighted to see some young hands joining the old hands. "We have several 30-40 years olds. But there will always be a need to hire younger talents to secure production volumes and new insights," says Van Dijk. He notes that ironically Unicum's Silver Jubilee revealed a silver lining on the Covid-19 cloud. More recently, freesia trade is blossoming as never before. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, people spend much more time at home, taking an interest in decoration and home styling. "Currently freesia prices are skyrocketing. Yields between 40 and 70 cents per main stem may lure in younger aged groups. But one should not forget that for many years profit margins in freesias have been razor-thin, labour costs ever-increasing, and labour shortage alarming, especially during the last five years. "So we have incorporated automation in every possible aspect of our business including the planting and harvesting of corms. Unfortunately, efforts to develop a freesia bunching machine were in vain with the untangling of combs being the major obstacle. All flowers are manually bunched in between the flower beds, a specialist job which not everyone manages with ease."

Strict production schedules also help Van Dijk guarantee a reliable supply of quality flowers in the volumes that buyers require from the day-to-day market.



ON THE BRINK OF A TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

While the processing of flowers remains a challenge, the Dutch freesia industry may be on the brink of a technological revolution in terms of growing systems. Van Dijk mentions the extraordinary results fellow freesia grower Matthieu Barendse (with whom he co-owns a Limonium nursery in Ethiopia), is achieving in a newly-built growth chamber for three-tier production of cut freesias under LEDs.

Barendse grows 'FreGanzia' – featuring double blooms of pure white flowers – in a fully conditioned growing environment. The station is without natural daylight and offers convenience with strong, sturdy main and side stems harvested in one single round and quality flowers available all year round. The system may ramp-up production, doing between four to five crop rounds instead of the traditional two harvests per year. The 850 solar panels provide electricity for the LED lighting, and thanks to the closed-loop system, pesticides are unnecessary. Barendse also reuses the drain water, and the climate cell is almost emission-free. In December, Barendse won the Royal FloraHolland GreenInnovation Award for his groundbreaking work. "Matthieu and I are thrilled about this project considering it as the sole lifeline to this type of flower crop. We believe this hi-tech protected cultivation may be a blue print for the future, making Dutch freesia growing more eco-friendly and economically-efficient and less dependent on the climate factor and physically less-taxing."

BREEDING MORE SHOWY FREESIAS

Van Dijk sees even more potential, for a more prominent freesia presence. He notes, "A UK consumer survey found that 30- to 45-year-olds are the largest spenders on freesia. We always thought that buyers were in their 50s, 60s and 70s. At flower shows and events, consumers tell us how they appreciate the flower's fragrance and hues. I don't believe freesias suffer from an image problem. But 'seeing is buying'; getting



consumers to see our product is crucial for impulse buying. The problem is that freesia blooms are relatively small. New genetics and advanced breeding technology should lead to bigger blooms and double blooms with higher yields. To date, freesias for the UK retail come mainly as Mono or Mono+, freesias arranged amidst some green foliage. As a filler flower, freesia is often too expensive but it also gets easily unnoticed. In mix bouquets you can partially avoid this by adding 55cm freesia stems to 50cm tall bouquets, so that flowers rise more prominently above the other flowers."

Meanwhile, the creation of a new Freesia variety is a complex, costly and time-consuming. "Producing a marketable variety can be the product of more than ten years of development. Attempts with tissue culture propagation have been unsuccessful so far. And bringing longer-stemmed, large-headed varieties to market is one, but newcomers must also produce enough corms to reuse. Consider that when growing freesias often 10 per cent of corms get lost," explains Van Dijk.

He grows the double flowered white variety 'Volante' and the deep red single flowered 'Red Passion'. "Double blooms are attractive but on average produce 20 per cent fewer flowers. While traditional wholesale customers will demand the more voluminous and fragrant double blooms, the retail segment will often prefer the extended combs of the single flowered varieties."

All flowers are manually bunched in between the flower beds – a specialist job which not everyone manages with ease.

Freesia mix bouquet including 'Ilse,' 'Blue Velvet,' the soft pink 'Rosario' and the bold pink 'Pink Passion'.



STANDING STILL IS NOT AN OPTION

Meanwhile, a range of festive activities for member growers, employees and customers will mark the 25-year milestone this year. Celebrations began on 3 March with all growers enjoying coffee and cake treats in their greenhouse.

Van Dijk concludes, "Despite the trend to smaller production areas along with a decline of the number of growers, Unicum has been able to stand the test of time, evolving into one of the most potent sales organisations in the Dutch freesia industry. It supplies a vast array of freesias in different colours. And we are convinced that the freesia is back on the map and among one of the highest ranking cut flowers in the international market. As a growers collective, all Unicum members have worked hard to build the Unicum brand. And their tireless efforts have enabled them to serve a wide group of customers. As an individual grower we would have never achieved this."

Van Dijk believes there is every reason to congratulate Unicum. "I am brave enough to say that without Unicum there wouldn't have been any freesias left on the market today. In my view, Unicum has allowed Dutch freesia growers to prove their added value to wholesalers and retailers. For the next 25 years, I hope that this cooperation will expand further, welcoming more growers, more business and more intensive collaboration and cross pollination. Standing still is not an option."

PROUD OF BEING PART OF THE FLORICULTURAL INDUSTRY

More recently, I had the opportunity to guide several Embassy Delegates around our location in Aalsmeer. For a visit to our site, we took care of the safety measures to meet each other, testing and all wearing facemasks.

Our dynamic and highly organised trading site for flowers left the ambassador and his entourage with a lasting impression. What they saw was a beehive of activity with thousands of trolleys with flowers and potted plants being distributed efficiently and quickly, after being auctioned off earlier that morning.

Looking down from the visitors' footbridge on this huge process made me proud of Royal FloraHolland cooperative and its members. I am proud of being part of this floricultural Industry. When you're active in the floral business for many years, you sometimes forget what a joy we bring to the world. All products grown with passion and dedication come together at our marketplaces with only one purpose: finding their way to the places of thousands of consumers.

Presenting this process to people from outside the industry opens up your eyes again. When I take people around our marketplaces, they are always impressed. They find it hard to believe that we can organise a commercial and logistic process at our marketplaces where products, which were harvest yesterday, find their way to the wholesalers and afterwards to their final destination around the globe within 24 hours.

And it is not hard to imagine why they are so impressed. During the day, we collect all the products coming in from several destinations, both from local and international production areas. All products are stored according to the required cold regime. Then in the morning, the commercial process is started by our auctioneers, who steer the digital auction clock and try to get the best price out of the market.

No matter how many trolleys there are to be auctioned, they are always prepared with the actual market situation to know the different products and

specifications to inform the buyers during the buying process. Of course, all the digital information is available on the laptop via the remote buying application.

After the commercial transaction is made, trolleys are taken out of their storage and sent towards the distribution area — an almost fully automated process. Our logistics department is well-organised in the distribution area to ensure that the products are split between the different buyers and sent to the wholesalers' booth within the delivery timeslot.

Since we switched from a distribution process based on the virtual information printed on the logistic labels to a voice-controlled process, where all the information is mentioned on the headphones this is even more efficient. Our process starts at six o'clock in the morning and between ten and twelve o'clock, depending on the quantities we are finalising for this daily process. More than 100,000 transactions happen on an average day; they are then delivered and on their way to the consumer.

At Royal FloraHolland, we bring joy and happiness to the consumers and our growers and buyers - we do that with a big passion for flowers and plants. I hope that you all find the time to be proud of your work.

Fred van Tol
Manager of International Development
Royal FloraHolland





SAKATA

PASSION in Seed

Celebrates Fleuroselect,
for 50 Years a
True Champion of the
Ornamentals Industry!

Campanula Champion Pink, Fleuroselect Gold Medal Winner

Congratulations

Dear Sally, Ann and Ellen,

Fleuroselect is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Congratulations on reaching such a milestone with great success!

Not only do we celebrate an organization's anniversary; it is the 'family-feeling' that Fleuroselect has accomplished amongst its members that is so valuable and commendable.

May this journey of success and unity continue in the coming years.

Sincerely,

Team Takii



Canna Cannova® Bronze Scarlet F1

Discover Takii, one of the world's leading breeders of vegetables and flowers via www.takii.eu





It's full steam ahead for Fleuroselect

After the tumultuous year 2020 caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Fleuroselect cancelled its 50th-anniversary convention in the Netherlands. Now, in 2021, it is full steam ahead. The Fleuroselect brand, and its products, are increasingly marketing themselves via online services. In June, Fleuroselect flexed their creative muscles, offering a Studio FlowerTrials live stream event substituting for this year's cancelled FlowerTrials.

AUTHOR: ANN JENINEN
PHOTOS: DIMITRIOS FOS AND FLEUROSELECT

The coronavirus pandemic was a major setback for the 50th anniversary of Fleuroselect, the international organisation of breeders and young plant producers. The three-day gathering in July 2020 for the top management of the global breeding world organised in Amsterdam to celebrate the anniversary had to be cancelled.

This celebratory programme, including visits to top-notch locations in horticulture and a Gold Medal and FleuroStar plant display with all winners still commercially available from the past 50 years, had to be put aside. Still, the international breeders organisation has bounced back quickly. "Not being able to celebrate our 50th anniversary has been a significant disappointment for

the organisation. After a long preparation, we had to cancel the event twice, the first time in 2020 and the second time this summer. Even though Corona shook us up, we did not give up. Our Board and Secretariat is flexible and managed to shift around quickly. We focused on what could be done with the limited possibilities during lockdown," says Karol Pawlak, Fleuroselect President.

FLOWERTRIALS INTEGRATION

One of the main challenges the organisation faced right from the beginning was the cancellation of FlowerTrials, for which Fleuroselect has run the secretariat since 2015. Together with the FlowerTrials Foundation's Board and all participating breeders, it was decided to cancel the event at rather a late stage in the preparations in 2020. This decision, however, has led to a change of strategy for this trade event which its set-up can explain.

Starting with only five companies, FlowerTrials has grown to an event with over 60 participants, united for the last 12 years under a foundation managed by a small Board of Directors following a manifesto which, although agreed to by all the participating companies, is not legally binding. The financial uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 crisis led to the subsequent concern of the Board members relating to their responsibility under the existing structure. It was therefore agreed at the FlowerTrials Annual Meeting in September 2020 that the event would be better organised under a membership structure. With Fleuroselect already having shown interest in strengthening the relationship, consolidation of the FlowerTrials event within Fleuroselect was seen as the ideal way to move forward.

Karol Pawlak: "Over the years,



*Left to right
Fleuroselect's
Hans Durieux,
Sally van der
Horst, Karol
Pawlak, Ann
Jennen and Marc
Driessen.*

*The brand
Fleuroselect is
increasingly
marketing
itself via online
services.*

FlowerTrials has evolved from a small-scale promotion initiative to one of the major trade events in worldwide ornamentals. The original foundation set-up did not match the daily needs anymore and the pandemic highlighted that even more. "The adoption of the new Articles of Association including the FlowerTrials integration at the Fleuroselect Extraordinary General Meeting in April of this year has been the final step in the process of amalgamation. We are delighted that the companies under the FlowerTrials umbrella have put their trust in the organisation to maintain and nurture this primary event in the pot and bedding plant calendar."

LIVE STREAMING

Not only a considerably amount of work has been done behind the scenes, but also the Fleuroselect frontstage has changed considerably. The entire promotion strategy has taken a significant shift towards digital, and many online initiatives have emerged. The organisation set up digital trial walks where Secretary-General Sally van der Horst showed the plants in front of the camera and Marketing & Communications Manager Ann Jennen managed the backstage and streaming platform. Last summer, they were accompanied by the Chairman of the Entries and Evaluations Committee Ruud Brinkkemper at the field trial at PanAmerican Seed in Venhuizen (NL). A few weeks ago, a Livestream was broadcast from the Syngenta greenhouses in Andijk (NL), with Judge Gerard Werink sharing his

expertise. Additional Livestreams on trial fields across Europe are planned for this summer.

Ann Jennen: "When confronted with all the trade fairs and events that could not take place anymore, we decided to focus on our core business and adapt that to the new reality. For Fleuroselect, that means trialing and promoting new varieties. Showing the latest plant innovations via livestreams directly from greenhouses and trial fields brings real added value to our members and the industry."

STUDIO FLOWERTRIALS

In June, following the cancellation of FlowerTrials for the second year 'Studio FlowerTrials' saw the light as a digital alternative for the physical FlowerTrials displays in week 24, bringing the latest breeding in pot and bedding plants to growers, wholesalers, retailers and all interested parties within the worldwide ornamental industry. Dutch TV presenter Marit van Bohemen was contracted to host the show and in addition to the FlowerTrials members, she was also joined by several guests for discussions on current trends and industry topics.

Flagship award FleuroStar from Fleuroselect also continued during the pandemic. Digital editions took place in both 2020 and 2021 for which most plant promotion was done online. During both editions, physical plant line-ups were foreseen for the jury panel of over 30 experts who came by either in person or took part in one of the dedicated Zoom sessions. This year's winner was revealed during the Fleuroselect Winners Event on 29 June and could be viewed directly via a dedicated Livestream.

Sally van der Horst: "As we have been unable to present the medals to our Gold Medal winners for the second year in a row, we thought we might combine all our awards into one Fleuroselect Winner Event. Wel kicked off by handing over the honours to the 2021 and 2022 Gold Medal winners and then we proceeded to the announcement of the new FleuroStar winner."



The four best IPM practices to protect roses against False Codling Moth infestations

Thaumatotibia leucotreta, commonly known as the False Codling Moth (FCM), is a threat to the production and marketing of roses, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. This article outlines four crucial Integrated Pest Management (IPM) interventions against this dreaded pest.

AUTHOR: DR LISBETH RIIS

The highly polyphagous False Codling Moth is a major phytosanitary concern for rose growers. It reduces the yield and quality of the crop and, as a quarantine insect pest, restricts the global trade of cut roses. FCM is currently the leading cause of interceptions in cut flowers exported to the European Union. In 2019, the Dutch National Plant Protection Organisation (NPPO) and the European Union (EU) found that the number of FCM interceptions on Kenyan roses remained over 30, leading to the categorisation of FCM species as quarantine pests. Under further pressure to reduce interceptions by the end of 2021 or risk an increase in checks to 50 or 100 per cent of all imports,



Thaumatotibia leucotreta.



Mapping of the trap captures of FCM.

rose growers must turn to an effective IPM solution to combat the destructive pest.

Dr Lisbeth Riis, CEO at Scarab Solutions, has more than 15 years of experience working closely with greenhouse rose growers in Kenya. Here she outlines four control measures that, when combined, can effectively combat the proliferation of False Codling Moth infestations and deliver the high-quality products that international markets demand.

1 STAY ALERT TO EARLY SIGNS OF DEVELOPMENT WITH DIRECT SCOUTING MEASURES

Early signs of FCM are often missed, especially during the larvae stage when all five instars of the pest's development occur inside the plant. This problem demonstrates why careful direct scouting for early indicators of pest presence in the crop is critical, and growers can swiftly apply intervention measures when population sizes are still small. Scouts should monitor for any

of small holes, brown spots, or dark brown frass on rosebuds.

2 IDENTIFY GREENHOUSE HOTSPOTS WITH TIMELY TRAPPINGS

During the adult moth life stage, FCM is most active during the night. FCM-specific pheromone traps can make up for this lack of visibility by identifying areas of high concentration that require immediate attention.

Growers can also use dispensers loaded with a high density of synthetic female pheromone to disorientate adult male moths and disrupt mating efforts to keep population sizes at a manageable level.

3 RELY ON DIFFERENT MODES OF ACTION TO DETER ESTABLISHED COLONIES

As FCM are poor flyers, dispersal is usually limited to a maximum of several hundred meters from the original host plant, and they take time to colonise and settle in a new host crop. The first detections are



SOUNDING THE ALARM FOR PLANT HEALTH

Ralf Lopian was chair of the International Steering Committee for the International Year of Plant Health 2020. Ralf is Finland's Deputy Chief Plant Health Officer at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

"Invasive, exotic pests and diseases threaten our plants. One of the primary drivers of this increase is an expansion of international agricultural trade.

We see disturbances in and weakening of ecosystems. And it is well known that weakened and disturbed ecosystems are much easier prey to pests and diseases. And we have climate change, which changes our climatic parameters, affecting our ecosystems.

Over the last years and decades, we see the resources of National Plant Protection Organisations diminishing. We see that plant health research is reducing in many countries of this world. We see individual disciplines in the plant health field, such as taxonomic expertise, decreasing substantially, and we see fewer diagnostic services in many countries.

These challenges increase the risk for pests and diseases. Plant pests and diseases do not respect national borders and do not show passports.

This increase in threats was the reason for the International Year of Plant Health 2020. It was an effort to raise public and political awareness of plant health and help governments and the international community address these challenges.

In effect, plant health will help humankind achieve some of its most critical objectives as described in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Agenda. In particular, goal number 20, 'hunger' and goal number 13, 'Climate action.'

Incredibly global pests and diseases are responsible for up to 40 per cent losses in all food crops, a loss of 220 billion USD per year. The world's population will increase to ten billion by 2050, and agricultural production must rise by 60 per cent to feed the world. Plant health measures can help stop or slow the spread of pests and reduce losses and damages.

Climate change affects the interaction of plants against infestation from pests within the ecosystem. For example, already in Europe, there are Bark Beetle sightings in areas where they've never been before.

We can do something about this with better cooperation between public and private sectors. In my keynote speech at AIPH's International Plant Health Conference in March 2021, I discuss the benefits to society of working together for the sake of plant health.

Prevention is more crucial and cost-effective than dealing with full-blown plant health emergencies.

At the beginning of this year, AIPH initiated and surveyed its members in response to the growing concerns about biosecurity worldwide. The results of this survey is an essential commitment of the global ornamental horticultural industry. The recommendations contained in this report offer a promising roadmap for improved public-private collaboration."

Read more about AIPH Plant Health Survey Report on page 50.

Watch Ralf Lopian's keynote at AIPH's 2021 International Plant Health conference [HERE](#)

an ideal time to intervene further with targeted control in infestation hotspots.

Biopesticides such as *Beauveria bassiana* (e.g. Botanigard) and *Bacillus thuringiensis* (e.g. Dipel DF) are recommendable. Pesticides such as Methoxyfenozide and Spinetoram provide similar results – but it is essential to alternate different modes of action to avoid the development of pesticide resistance.

4 HARNESS THE POWER OF DIGITAL MAPPING TO MAKE EACH INTERVENTION A SUCCESS, FIRST TIME ROUND

Paper-based analysis and personal knowledge remain standard features in pest management strategies – yet they can limit the scope of FCM controls, especially when growers must cover multiple greenhouses. However, user-friendly digital maps can provide a quantified insight into the spatial distribution of the pest and the risk zones across the entire farm – allowing growers to make data-based decisions when it comes to early quality control measures. For instance, digital maps can highlight the number of FCM captured in pheromone traps and guide sprayers to specific areas that require targeted sprays immediately. This quick action can reduce the risk of interceptions, focus resources on key areas and limit waste – allowing farm managers to become more targeted, timely and efficient in their overall management of FCM.

DISRUPT THE FCM LIFECYCLE WITH EFFECTIVE IPM AT EVERY STAGE

If significant FCM interceptions continue to persist into 2022, rose growers risk huge losses and tarnished reputations. An IPM strategy, supported by a reliable scouting and mapping system, can overcome this phytosanitary challenge.

Growers can combine targeted and effective early intervention controls to break the pest's lifecycle – and not only prevent a costly outbreak but also secure a long-term reputation in international markets with high-quality rose products that are FCM-free.

- MUTYAMBAI, D.M., MBECHÉ, N.I. AND ONAMU, E. ET AL. (2020) FALSE CODLING MOTH, *THAUMATOTIBIA LEUCOTRETA* (MEYRICK) A NEW THREAT TO HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY: STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE STATUS, IMPACT AND MANAGEMENT IN KENYA. *J PLANT DIS PROT*, 127: 799–804.
- CARDE, R.T. AND MINKS, A.K. (1995) CONTROL OF MOTH PESTS BY MATING DISRUPTION: SUCCESSSES AND CONSTRAINTS. *ANNUAL REVIEW OF ENTOMOLOGY*, 40: 559–85.
- STOTTER RL, SAMWAYS MJ, HATTINGH V. 2014. SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF FALSE CODLING MOTH ACROSS LANDSCAPES IN THE CITRUSDAL AREA (WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA). *CROP PROTECTION*, 60, 1–4.
- OSTOJÁ-STARZEWSKI, J. C. ET AL. (2017) DEFRA PLANT PEST FACTSHEET, FALSE CODLING MOTH, *THAUMATOTIBIA LEUCOTRETA*, [HTTPS://PLANTHEALTHPORTAL.DEFRA.GOV.UK/ASSETS/FACTSHEETS/PPN-FALSECODLINGMOTH-FINAL.PDF](https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/PPN-FALSECODLINGMOTH-FINAL.PDF)
- MOORE, S.D., KIRKMAN, W., RICHARDS, G.I. AND STEPHEN, P. (2015) THE CRYPTOPHLEBIA LEUCOTRETA GRANULOVIRUS – 10 YEARS OF COMMERCIAL FIELD USE. *VIRUSES*, 7: 1284–1312.

Exporting flowers and plants by aeroplane is on the rise

Carlo Vijverberg and Alex van der Goes are the directors of Florca, a company specialising in exporting cut flowers and potted plants by air. The early days of the pandemic nearly halted their operations, but now they see a sharp rebound in demand. They look at ornamentals' global production and trade, commenting on economies of scale, digital transformation, and niche flowers' prominent role.

1999. From small beginnings in a Naaldwijk packing shed, the USA and Canada were their sole markets. Then in 2003, Florca became part of the Dutch Flower Group (DFG). Since then, the company has grown in leaps and bounds over the past two decades with a turnover that ranges between 15 and 20 million euros and 1.6 million kilograms of goods traded in 2020.

Vijverberg attributes 80 per cent of the business to the export sales of cut flowers, 15 per cent to potted plants export and five per cent to hardware/horticultural supplies. The export company employs 30 staff and operates from a modern location, annexe packing hall and cold storage facilities situated only a few hundred metres from Royal FloraHolland's silvery office tower in Naaldwijk. Florca's customer base includes floral distributors, wholesalers, florists, event planners, hotels and super yachts in 60 countries worldwide, including regions and continents such as North America, the Gulf region, Asia, the Caribbean and Africa.

"An unwritten rule in our business is to never bypass the wholesaler and distribute directly if your customer has a built strong relationship with an importing wholesaler. In new markets, we will strive to sell B2B as directly as possible, always focusing on value-added services," explains Vijverberg.

SERVICE WHOLESALER

Florca is quintessentially a service wholesaler and a specialist in exporting flowers and plants by

AUTHOR: RON VAN DER PLOEG
PHOTOS: BIANCA FENNE

The new corporate identity of Florca launched in December 2020. Before initiation, the new-look Maurits Cornelis Escher inspired logo had been pinned to the office wall, awaiting comments and views from the organisation's entire staff. As a draft image, even then recalls

Florca's sales director Alex van der Goes, "It felt right, right from the beginning. The pictorial logo identifies our company at first glance: flowers, global business and aeroplanes. It was greeted with great enthusiasm by the entire team." Growing over leaps and bounds Van der Goes and managing director Carlo Vijverberg founded Florca in



Florca's office staff.



air. Drawing a parallel with more traditional floral wholesale is, therefore, tricky. Van der Goes elaborates, “Our philosophy is less a pull strategy. We do respond to actual demand, but also want to build lasting customer relationships and use push strategies that are driven by projections of customer demand.”

ONE YEAR INTO THE PANDEMIC

In their recently refurbished office, Vijverberg and Van der Goes take a brief look at the overall impact Covid-19 has had on the floral industry and where their business stands today. Vijverberg says,

Alex van der Goes (left) and Carlo Vijverberg are the directors of Florca.

To keep the Florca quality promise, Florca installed an outside vacuum cooler in front of their premises in Naaldwijk.

“Compared with the rollercoaster events in the early days of the pandemic, today’s market remains firm and has recovered remarkably well and quickly. One year on, we can frame things in a better perspective. In March last year, we had no idea how the global health crisis would impact our lives and business. In many countries flowers and plants were not deemed essential and governments ordered florist shops and garden centres worldwide to close. By mid-March we were losing 80 per cent of our turnover.” Van der Goes adds, “We all had many questions and there was uncertainty over how long the pandemic would last. Fortunately we frequently met online with other co-directors within the DFG group to share our experiences.” Within five weeks, retail sales started to pick up, but for a speciality wholesaler such as Florca, whose proportion of customers are hospitality and event planners, the recovery was slower. Van der Goes explains, “Several countries continued being under lockdown, with only a few places open to international tourists.” Vijverberg notes, “The irony of the coronavirus pandemic is

that in the long run it turned out very well for nearly all segments of floriculture. Initially, the negative impact was comparable to a combination of the losses and disruption of 9/11, the 2008 financial crisis and the 2010 eruption of Iceland’s Eyjafjallajökull volcano. But the recovery was amazingly quick. The summer of 2020 was by far the best ever thanks to end-consumers taking an interest in home decoration and styling. This trend translates into high-prices and increased product volumes. Last summer, accounting for 60 per cent of our sales, was the wealthy Gulf region staying at home when they normally would travel to fancy places in Europe, such as the Côte d’Azur. To date, demand in the Middle East continues to be strong with the Sugar Feast in May being a big floral holiday this year. However, several island vacation destinations are still closed and the event industry is largely halting in its track, which is of course less beneficial for our business.”

LEAN BUSINESS

As Florca’s parent company DFG led its more than 30 businesses through the initial fog of the pandemic, the main focus was on creating a more efficient organisation.



As a result, DFG companies Hamifleurs (Florca's neighbour next door at Trade Parc Westland) and Aalsmeer-based OZ Export joined forces, combining their assets, logistics operations and office supported functions. The newly combined organisation OZ-Hami performs purchasing activities for Florca. According to Van der Goes, the working relationship between the three is a meaningful and effective one. "We know each member of the procurement team personally. They consider Florca as their specialised air freight company, giving us full attention and understanding with the time sensitive issues and specific demands involved in shipping flowers and plants by air. In the past, it was common practice to purchase your own flowers and plants at the auction clock but that ship has now sailed. A more centralised purchasing enables more efficient inventory control, lower staffing costs and fewer overheads. Plus it allows us to concentrate on distribution, customer acquisition and building stronger relationships with our customers."

Florca does not rely entirely on the auction for its flowers and plants. Other sources come directly through the standard Virtual Market Place (VMP) with Dutch, Belgian, German and Danish growers bringing breadth and depth to the product portfolio. Florca's role is to ensure that the delivery of clients' products match their customers' demands for quality, specification, and shelf-life. For more global sourcing of, for example, tropical flowers, the company makes use of DFG's Coloriginz company.

THE OUTLOOK OF GLOBAL PRODUCTION

Looking at the global production of cut flowers and plants Vijverberg, born the son of a lily grower, sees that growers are expanding their businesses to benefit from the economies of scale. "More recently, three Dutch lily farms merged, forming a big player in the



Florca's dedicated workforce is instructed to treat all flowers with care.

global lily market, growing around 20 million stems on 12 hectares of greenhouse areas in multiple locations. Another example is grower alliance Zentoo representing 87ha of chrysanthemum production."

Ten years ago, almost all cut flowers were sold through the daily auction, while today, the cut flower trade is increasingly modelling on long-term supply contracts for the delivery of tailor-made retail orders. What's more, cut flowers are selling more and more online, which automatically means smaller product volumes. "So, several cut flower grower groups in the Netherlands have opened subsidiaries at the auction for same-day delivery to exporters. Both production and trade seek collaboration. Growers because they want more security of orders and exporters because they want to oversee their supply chain," says Vijverberg.

He and his companion see the benefits of more vertically integrated production but don't think it is wise for wholesalers to embark on flower production. "Just stick to what you're good at. A grower is an expert in growing. To excel, Dutch horticulturists often grow a single crop instead of multiple species."

NICHE FLOWERS

Large-scale flower farms at home and abroad is one reality. But out there are still many small to medium-sized growers who produce niche flowers, which Vijverberg and Van der Goes say, are essential for a diversified product offer. "In air freight flower and plant exports, you see that local wholesalers purchase their bread-and-butter products close to home. In the Far East, this often means China. More mainstream products arrive from Kenya in the Middle East, while in the USA, these come from Latin America, Canada and California. However, new varieties and more rare flowers are frequently imported from the Netherlands through companies such as Florca."

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Vijverberg and Van der Goes' fear is that these niche flowers will become increasingly scarce now that digital transformation and mandatory eco-certification creates uncertainty for smaller growers. "The Floriday platform, for example, is, in essence, a good initiative. But digital transformation is a gradual long-term process, and change does not happen overnight. Our main concern was that of Royal FloraHolland becoming the new Amazon in flowers and plants. But



we are happy with how the auction responded to the protests," says Van der Goes.

He adds that Florca is also in a mid-digitalisation of processes expanding their webshop year-on-year, the webshop's speed and diversification product being the most significant challenge. "Its inventory is linked to our partners in the global value chain. But you don't want a situation in which customers see the same product five times but offered for five different prices."

Van der Goes believes it is good to care for the planet and its people. "Cut flower prices may have shot up in the past ten months but we should not forget that for many

years profit margins for niche flower growers have been thin. We believe they deserve to be cherished because they are a key factor in the Netherlands' success in global flower trade."

POTTED PLANT EXPORTS

With rising demand for variegated, patterned tropical plants, cacti and succulents in export markets, Florca's potted plant exports grow significantly, even if using air freight is a costly exercise and comes with much stricter plant health regulations.

Vijverberg says, "Currently, there is such a strong demand for exclusive indoor plants that the product value is way bigger than the cost of

Florca's handling and packing team.

airfreight. A much bigger concern is the availability of products. Even if you are willing to pay one euro per plant, there is still not enough production. Many products are sold out with growers kindly asking you to re-contact them in three months. In terms of importing country requirements, they vary depending on the country. It is a given that in the USA and Canada plants should be bare-rooted with no growing media attached to the roots, which excludes both markets for our indoor plants.

Overall, you need more discipline and paperwork in airfreight plant exports, but we don't like to say no to our customers, so if you can bring them into the country, we will include plants in our shipments."

BUYER-SELLER RELATION

In a floral supply chain with a tendency to cut out the middlemen, developing, nurturing and maintaining the buyer-seller relation is more crucial than ever. Vijverberg elaborates, "Pricing is a basic factor. Get it wrong and you will lose the customer's interest. If the price is right you need to go the extra mile because customers don't buy on price alone. We have found that customers are willing to pay a higher price as long as the customer service and product quality is reliable and consistent."

To keep the Florca quality promise, Florca installed an outside vacuum cooler in front of their premises in Naaldwijk. Vacuum cooling improves the product quality. The technology takes away the heat from the flowers, which cools them down through and through within half an hour. So when the flowers leave Florca's premises, they are better prepared to withstand the long haul trip by plane. This cooling preserves and extends the freshness of flowers."

Asked about Florca's next step, Vijverberg and Van der Goes conclude by saying that they aim at a minimum of ten per cent growth in sales year on year, with cut flowers accounting for 70 per cent, houseplants 25 per cent and sundries five per cent of their international sales in 2025.

Stand-in 'FlowerTrials'

FCI magazine gladly accepted the invitation to attend their Open House event, which, pandemic or not, was filled to the brim with many spectacular new varieties.

AUTHOR AND PHOTOS: RON VAN DER PLOEG

Under normal circumstances, June is one of the most critical months of the year for everyone in the global ornamental horticulture industry. With summer around the corner, growers, plant buyers, plug producers, distributors, florists, garden centre retailers, journalists, and PR professionals flock into their thousands to trial grounds in Aalsmeer, Westland and Rheinland Westfalen (Germany) to attend the annual FlowerTrials. Not so



Pentas lanceolata Starcluster White features clusters of snowy white flowers that rise above beautifully contrasting green foliage.



The Fun House brand is not a series but a collection of petunias in vibrant colours and with stripes, spots, and hearts.

this year. Due to the pandemic, the FlowerTrials primarily moved to a virtual environment, showcasing hundreds of existing varieties and even more new introductions of annuals, perennials and gourmet vegetables. Syngenta Flowers, however, opted for a dual format. Next to its Blooming Brightly webinar, the company offered industry peers the possibility to view their newest plants in person in their greenhouses in De Lier. Here, tranquillity reigned supreme with, as you can guess, the most significant portion of visitors coming from the Netherlands and a handful of Germans and Belgians.

THE STATE OF THE BEDDING PLANT TRADE

Commenting on the state of the European bedding plant trade, Martijn Kuiper, Head of Product Management Europe, said that despite this year's challenging

spring weather with just a handful of dry and milder days, prices have been high. He says, "While in some parts of Europe garden centres and florist shop remained closed in other countries sales outlets cautiously reopened with consumers willing to spend more money on gardening. Now that the summer vacation is around the corner and the hospitality and leisure industry reopening, prices will become more reasonable. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has lured in novice gardeners. Now the industry needs to ensure it holds on to these customers and continues to meet their needs. The answer to that is simple: a strong focus on plants for patio pots and containers, low maintenance plants and excellent garden performance."

PLANTS FOR EARLY SUMMER SALES

Syngenta's Sunfinity 'Yellow with Dark Centre' suits every patio



Tranquillity reigned supreme with the most significant portion of visitors coming from the Netherlands and a handful of Germans and Belgians.

pot and container and delivers an excellent garden performance within open grounds too. Kuiper says the finishing time for this potted sunflower is between 8-10 weeks, with hard pinching required approximately two weeks after transplanting from tray to pot. Once six to seven nodes have developed on the stem, growers do a hard pinching leaving four nodes and eight leaves. Hard pruning will lead to a multi-branching and multi-flowering plant once it is ready for sale. Sunfinity ideally grows in 17 or 19cm pots and requires PGR's in its finishing stage. Sunfinity produces continuous blooms all season long and is attractive to birds and butterflies. In terms of marketing, Sunfinity is ideal for late spring and early summer sales, allowing garden retailers to extend their sales season with a premium-priced product. Also suited for early summer sales is cutting-raised pentas lanceolata 'Starcluster White', originally a semi-tropical shrub that does not

withstand late frosts in spring. Clusters of snowy white flowers rise above beautifully contrasting green foliage. The plant is tailor-made for butterflies too.

PETUNIA FUNHOUSE

Syngenta's feature item this year was petunia Fun House. Kuiper stresses that the brand is not a series but a collection of petunias in vibrant colours and with stripes, spots, and hearts. As you can guess, Fun House petunias give a fun addition to any hanging basket and patio containers.

Among the most unusual varieties is petunia Fun House Amethyst Sunshine. This variety has deep purple flowers with a yellow centre and almost resembles calibrachoa blooms. Petunia Fun House Peach Melba in soft hues of cream and pink is sure to be a favourite among British gardeners. At the same time, the fiery colours of petunia Fun House Glowing Garnet would perfectly do in any Mediterranean

garden. Another showstopper included the pink-veined petunia Fun House Vintage Lilac with a dark centre. Thus, Syngenta meets the consumer's growing demand for extraordinary and rare plant varieties with hits petunia Fun House collection.



Syngenta's Sunfinity 'Yellow with Dark Centre' suits every patio pot and container.

Diamond celebrations for the American Floral Endowment

FCI sat down with Debi Chedester, Executive Director of the American Floral Endowment (AFE), to talk about their 60th-anniversary celebration this year, and the important research and programmes they provide for the industry. We delve deeper into the industry solutions AFE has been funding, such as scientific research, internships, scholarships, education, and floral design grants.

AUTHOR: RON VAN DER PLOEG PHOTOS: AFE

The American Floral Endowment (AFE) has stayed true to its values for the past 60 years. Its mission as a charity has been advancing the horticultural industry now and for generations to come. For a non-native English speaker, the word ‘endowment’ is not an easy one to translate. The meaning might not immediately conjure up the correct image to explain the concerns of the AFE organisation. This ambiguity prompted us to kick off with a big question.

FCI: What is American Floral Endowment all about?

Debi Chedester: “The American Floral Endowment is an independent non-profit organisation that funds research, scholarships, internships, and grants in floriculture and horticulture for the benefit of the industry as a whole. The word ‘endowment’ refers to the total of a non-profit institution’s investable assets, where the interest



AFE’s research and programmes focus on all aspects of flowers and plants

and dividend gains are used to fund vital research and programmes that align with the needs of the industry. For AFE, this word signifies our commitment to industry dollars growing together to create greater funding for programmes and resources that benefit our industry.”

What does the word floral in flower endowment precisely mean?

“Floral in the American Floral Endowment spans across the floriculture industry. It’s not just cut flowers, but bulbs, bedding, perennials, indoor flowers and foliage plants as well. Our research and programmes focus on all aspects of flowers and plants from breeding and genetics, production and post-production, pest and diseases, packaging and shipping, to best practices for care and handling of flowers and plants. Research on sustainability and climate change are also a focus of future research programmes. We look at the whole life span on these products and don’t just focus on one area.”

If AFE represents ornamental horticulture in the USA, what can you tell us about the value and size of the industry?

“According to the 2020 Floriculture Crops Summary released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the wholesale value of floriculture crops is up nine per cent from 2019 valuations. Total crop value at wholesale for all growers with



Debi Chedester is Executive Director of the American Floral Endowment AFE.

\$10,000 or more in sales is estimated at \$4.80 billion for 2020, compared to \$4.42 in 2019. The top five producing states are Florida (at 1.14 billion), followed by California, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio. Together, these states account for 65 per cent of the total production value in the U.S. In 2019, there were 20,655 floriculture growers in fifty states in the U.S.”

Where does AFE come from, and has its ambitions and goals changed along the way?

“Originally starting as the foundation of the Society of American Florists, AFE separated to expand our reach beyond just the traditional floral side. Much of our research can be applied to flowers (cut and potted), potted foliage, perennials and bedding plants. Our goals of funding solutions to industry challenges haven’t changed much over the years, except to say that with ever-growing challenges we continue to expand and provide new resources and programmes to further assist the industry. An example of this is our new AFE Career Center which was launched last year. Labour is a major challenge, yet there wasn’t a place within the industry that connected jobseekers and employers. With AFE’s connections to all segments of the industry, along with our extensive work with faculty and students, it made sense to create a platform that could easily bridge the gap to introduce the industry to budding young professionals and help address the labour issues.”

Among your contributors is Asocolflores. Some narrow-minded folks may ask themselves why Colombian growers should fund research projects in the USA. Can you explain why cross-border participation in AFE is so important?

“While our name says American, much of the research we support can be used in other countries. All industry members struggle with the same challenges of tackling pests and diseases, utilising advances in technology, and other production issues. The research AFE funds, and the results of this research can be used globally. Asocolflores has been a major supporter of our work, and most recently the Thrips and Botrytis research being conducted. Only through industry support can we aggressively address these challenges. AFE research reports are available for free for use by



AFE’s internships give young professionals direct experience and connections in the industry.

the entire industry regardless of location. Our currently funded projects focus on industry practices leading to increased efficiency, reduced labour, improved crop quality, and increased profits.”

One of the most significant sustainability concerns for charities is steady income. Does this also apply to AFE?

“It certainly does. Donations and contributions make things happen. Without the past support from donors, we couldn’t be doing what we do today. AFE is always looking to engage new industry members while maintaining support of current donors to increase our sustainability and to further raise awareness for our industry programmes. Our annual fundraising event has been postponed for the past two years due to COVID-19. Instead, we’ve had to be creative in conducting virtual events to garner support. Currently, we are holding our Annual Fundraising Dinner virtually for the second year in a row. From now until Friday, August 13th, 2021, our entire Board of Trustees along with staff and other ambassadors are competing in a campaign named 60 Days to Raise \$60,000 in honour of our 60th Anniversary. Even throughout the pandemic, AFE’s Trustees remained committed to funding research, providing vital resources, opportunities, and programmes at 100 per cent when the industry needed additional stability the most.”

How do you convince industry professionals that it is vital to support charities such as AFE?

“An industry is only as strong as those that support it. It is vital to support

2021 MARKS AFE’S 60TH Anniversary

Throughout the year, we will be celebrating the past, present, and future of the Endowment, highlighting the many successes over the decades and those that helped us get there.

For 60 years, and only through industry support, AFE has provided vital research, programs, and resources to advance the floral industry.



Visit endowment.org/60th

CELEBRATE WITH US!

Donate \$60 in support of our 60th Anniversary and receive a commemorative t-shirt! Partner with AFE to help us continue this important work!

**Your charitable donation is fully tax-deductible*



AFE because without this critical research, the support of education through grants, and the support of young professionals with internships and scholarships—there wouldn't be advances. No other organisation in the industry provides all of these services, and AFE support is necessary for the continued growth of the industry. If we don't support university research, it will go away. If we don't support young professionals with scholarships and internship opportunities, they'll choose another field. AFE provides programmes that the industry needs to continue to grow and adapt.

What do you think are the most pressing issues in US floral that deserve funding?

“Right now, the significant issues are transportation, labour, and the supply chain. There are some things that unfortunately just can't be fixed with research money from



According to the 2020 Floriculture Crops Summary released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the wholesale value of floriculture crops is up nine per cent from 2019 valuations.

AFE. These are larger, ongoing challenges made worse by the pandemic. For AFE, we remain focused on our mission of funding solutions through research, supporting industry education, and fostering the next generation. If there is research that can be done to identify solutions to these challenges, we'll do it.”

One of the ideas behind AFE is to alleviate a potential constraint on the horticultural sector's growth in the future by investing in education. How urgent is the problem, and how to resolve it?

“It's urgent. The numbers of students entering the industry is not what it used to be. There's a shortage of workers in all segments of the industry, and it's a priority. Not only that, but as an industry, we need to work hard to change the perception of the available careers in the industry. There are so many other great career opportunities to explore, beyond the traditional production, wholesale and retail areas. Careers in communication/marketing, web design, and all business areas are also key to the success of our businesses. This shortage presents a challenge to recruit young professionals, but there are many efforts underway — not just through AFE, but by programmes such as Seed Your Future which AFE also supports. No one industry organisation can tackle this alone. It must be a collaborative effort of everyone to promote the many and varied career opportunities available. AFE helps by investing in both hands-on internships to put classroom knowledge to use and

providing annual scholarships to help recruit talent and with any financial boundaries. Additionally, our internships give young professionals direct experience and connections in the industry — building resumes and providing for future success. By preparing future generations to join our community, we are increasing the workforce, which is vital to the ongoing success of our industry.”

Tell us about AFE's young professional council and how to take the business internship to the next level and about the collaboration with universities at home and abroad?

“Our Young Professionals Council offers leadership and networking opportunities for young industry professionals through events, webinars, and volunteer opportunities. This group is free to join and welcomes any young person (under 35) looking to build relationships in the industry and support AFE's mission. AFE's collaboration with universities have deepened our connection with young professionals interested in our industry. Through connections with universities, we can reach faculty and students in the field. Our community of faculty members help promote our programmes, applications, and research. They also are invited to participate on a volunteer-basis to determine the best recipients for our scholarships and other awards. We haven't expanded these internationally at this point, but if other organisations have similar programmes where we can collaborate, we'd certainly be open to exploring that.”

What is the biggest future challenge for AFE?

“Increasing annual contributions to expand funding for more research and programmes is our biggest challenge. The number of industry businesses continues to decline and that means the potential for fewer donations. The work we do is vital to the growth of the industry, and we need more support in order to tackle more challenges.”

AFE yearly has approximately one million dollars available for research funding. Who decides on which research and scholarships proposals receive funding? AFE accepts new research proposals annually, which are reviewed by its Research Committee, which consists of industry experts across all segments. As a general guideline, AFE's primary research priorities are listed below. They are focused on all floricultural crops — fresh-cut flowers, fresh-cut greens, flowering potted plants, foliage plants, perennials, and bedding plants.

- Botrytis Control and Management
- Thrips Control and Management
- Bio-Control of Pests
- Post-Harvest Technology
- Production Technology
- Advanced Breeding Technology, including CRISPR
- Longterm Storage and Shipping Conditions for Cut Flowers, Bedding and Potted Plants
- Automation and Technology Leading to Labour Savings
- Sustainable Production and Handling Practices
- Reduce the Impact of Climate Change on Production, Handling, and Product Quality

This list is reviewed each year, and AFE's Research Coordinator, Dr. Terril Nell, regularly speaks to industry members to collect feedback on new challenges and research focuses.

Based on the feedback AFE receives; it solicits proposal to address these challenges. Submissions are also reviewed by industry members, and are then peer-reviewed to ensure that the projects AFE funds are solid in both mechanics and desired outcomes.



Green City Post

Showcase your 'Living Green' city at the AIPH World Green City Awards 2022

ONLINE
ENTRIES
NOW OPEN

AUTHOR: HANNAH PINNELLS PHOTOS: DUSTY GEDGE

What are the measures that quantify greening in cities, and how can it be decided whether there is enough or not? Who has the responsibility and the influence to make our cities greener, and to make them greener for all? Bringing more greenery into cities is now at the centre of conversations around major topics, including health, investment and climate change.

AIPH is excited to champion ambitious nature-orientated approaches to city design and operation that address the major challenges facing cities today. Through the awards, AIPH shares excellence in achievement and leadership by city authorities that use plants and nature to drive change in order to create better environments. Entries are invited from all city authorities around the world that use 'Living Green' in their plans for transformation, and can be in collaboration with a delivery authority such as a utility provider or community organisation.

Awards are offered in six categories with a winner in each category and one overall AIPH World Green City winner:

- **Health and wellbeing:** Addressing the medical, behavioural, and social determinants of health for residents.
- **Climate change:** Tackling the root causes and effects of climate change in order to build more liveable and resilient cities.
- **Economic recovery and inclusive growth:** Creating systems and solutions



that allow all city residents to overcome economic distress and thrive.

- **Biodiversity:** Addressing the loss of species, habitats, ecosystem health, and genetic diversity.
- **Water:** Ensuring water resources are safeguarded and wisely used, with clean water available to all while also protecting residents from flooding risks.
- **Social cohesion:** Fostering belonging, trust and inter-generational as well as cross-cultural relationships to prevent exclusion, marginalisation and violence.

Entries must be strategic in nature, such as a policy and/or a programme leading to the delivery of a collection of related projects rather than a single project, and will be evaluated according to five criteria – strategic initiatives that are bold, that pursue a meaningful impact, are being successfully implemented, that have potential to further scale or spread to other cities, and exemplify resilience in how they are conducted. Dr Tim Beatley, Founder and Executive Director of Biophilic Cities shares the enthusiasm of AIPH. "I am excited that

for the first time there will be a global award that shines a light on those most exemplary green cities, and I am certain this award will help to inspire and guide innovation and commitments to nature in many cities around the globe." The Biophilic Cities network is comprised of cities from around the globe dedicated to improving the connection between residents and urban nature. "We believe this award will play an important role in accelerating the global biophilic and green cities movement", adds Tim.

Entry is free of charge and easily done online. Cities create a profile and prepare their entry over time, with a final submission deadline of 14th March 2022. To enter visit www.aiph.org/green-city/green-city-awards

AIPH is grateful to our AIPH World Green City Awards Partners 2022 Biophilic Cities, Cities and Health, Trees For Cities, The Nature of Cities, ICLEI CitiesWithNature and Urban Land Institute. Thank you to our Media Partners Cities Today, FloraCulture International and HostCity.

A convincing and inspiring case for city greening

AUTHOR: HANNAH PINNELLS PHOTOS: DUSTY GEDGE

The environmental, health and economic benefits of nature-based-solutions are a convincing argument for integrating green roofs and green walls into city infrastructure – say experts during a City of London Green City Briefing run by the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH) and the Worshipful Company of Gardeners.



Barnet North London.

The third in the series of highly relevant Briefings, held on 15 June 2021, explored how green roofs and walls provide an extra-dimensional approach to city greening.

It is essential that the true value of urban green space is globally understood, and that decision-makers have the tools to guarantee its position. With a body of evidence available to quantify the benefits, policymakers and decision-makers can advocate projects to make green roofs and walls more commonplace. Dr Daniela Rizzi, Senior Officer for Nature-Based Solutions and Biodiversity at ICLEI Europe, joined Mr Dusty Gedge, President Federation of European Green Roofs and Walls, and Mr Kelvin Kan, Principal Architect & Façade Consultant, and founder of AgFacadesign in Singapore, to discuss advances in city greening. In his talk, Gedge drew on his experience in the City of London, UK, as a designer policymaker and technical advisor to demonstrate how green roofs and walls are key to adapting cities to the climate

crisis and delivering biodiversity. He explained that one reason green cities are the future is that they can address two issues that cities suffer globally – urban heat island effect and flooding. Cities are not designed for raised temperatures; Vegetation on walls and roofs can help to both cool the city and manage periodic surface flooding.

Touring buildings across London, Dusty highlighted rainwater gardens that can help to reduce the temperature at street level, biodiverse gardens that benefit birds and butterflies, and reflected on the advances in sustainable retail stores since 1999, asking what will the most sustainable retail store in 2039 look like? Kelvin Kan in his talk, 'Greening the Concrete Jungle' of Singapore, presented two projects to demonstrate how greening has been successfully used to enhance the city after the rapid urbanisation of Singapore in the 1970s led to rising temperatures and the start of urban heat island effect.

A dull and unoccupied office building at

158 Cecil Street in Singapore's Central Business District was transformed by a hanging garden to a bright and inviting, full tenancy space. A combination of architecture, landscape, interior, and façade design was used to create a lively, green, and connected space. The height of the building inspired a cathedral of green concept while glass and lighting worked particularly well to create a glowing lantern effect that drew the eye inside the building at night.

Furama hotel (city centre) in the heart of China Town was renovated after its mosaic tiles became damaged and started falling off. In line with Singapore's 'City in a Garden' vision, the decision was made to clad over the existing tiles with green features. Green walls and sky balconies were used to enhance the rooms while an experiential green water feature and waterfall provided a grand and inviting entrance to the hotel.

The Q&A session, led by Daniela Rizzi, answered questions from the audience of diverse professions from more than 40 countries. The questions covered a variety of fascinating topics that included energy cost savings, irrigation and maintenance, seed, and plant selection, building height and connecting nature, and tackling biophobia.

Watch the Green Roofs and Walls webinar at www.aiph.org/event/green-city-briefings-green-roofs-and-walls/



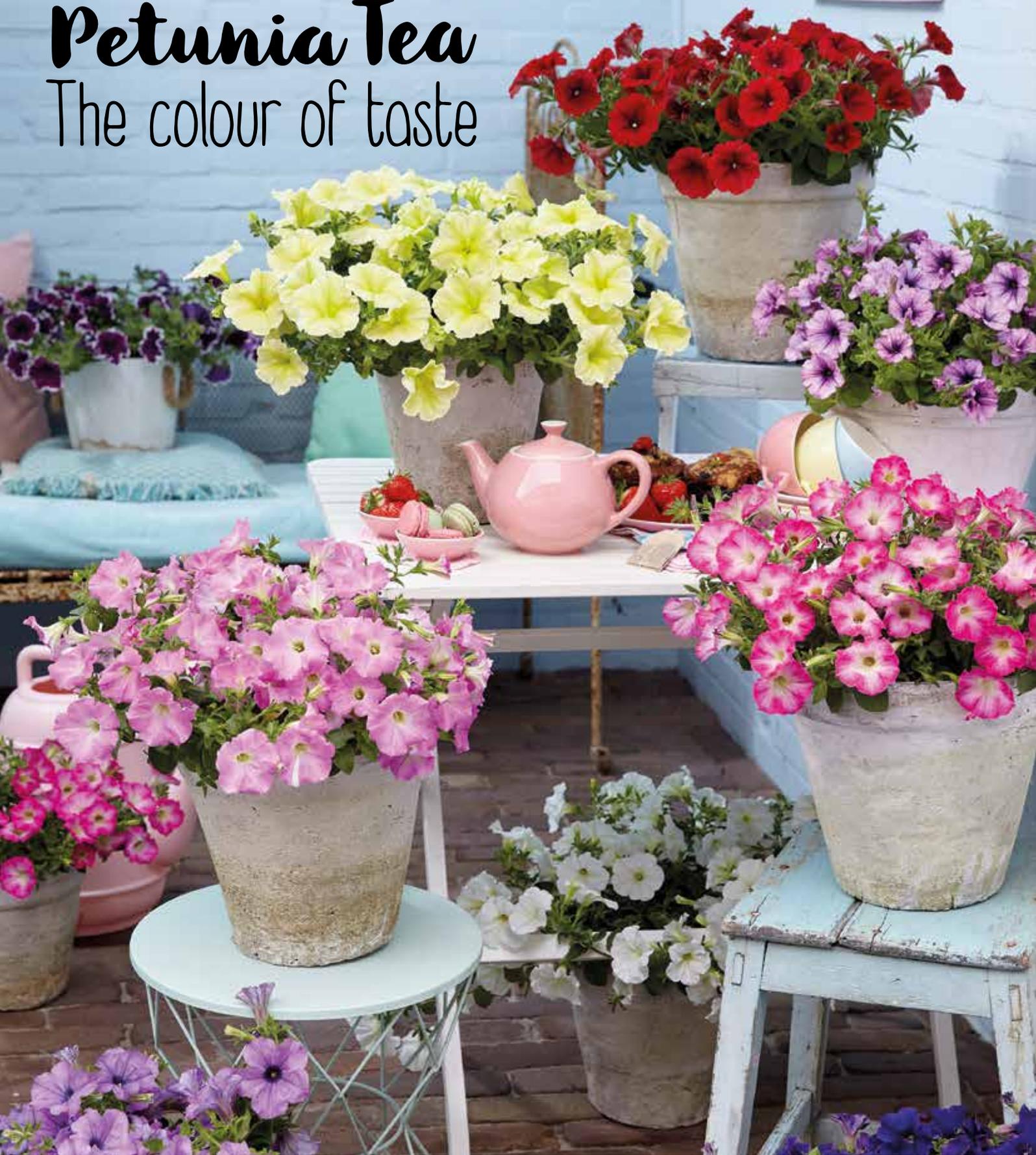
King willia, street City of London.



IKEA Greenwich.

Petunia Tea

The colour of taste



Excellent branching and garden performance
with rain tolerant blooms

WWW.BEEKENKAMP.NL

THERE IS ONLY ONE NEVADA FERN



The USA was the first country to adopt *Nephrolepis exaltata* 'Nevada', also known as the Nevada fern. It was spotted accidentally in an Aalsmeer greenhouse more than 20 years ago, among a batch of Boston ferns. Since its discovery, 'Nevada' continues to revolutionise the global fern industry.

AUTHOR: JOHN BIJL

The day I discovered it, I can clearly remember, there was one leaf sticking out among the ferns in the greenhouse. This fern's beauty instantly caught my eye as its appearance was one-of-a-kind. The plant stood out for its vigorous and dark green foliage, which had probably something to do with its rapid growth. A voice inside me said to cherish this particular fern. So, I carefully removed the leaf together with the rhizome from the plant and potted the cutting. This story is about how the first unique mother plant grew from one

single cutting. It proliferated into a beautiful fern with all the suitable characteristics we, as fern breeders and propagators, appreciate. These are robust growth, a perfect plant habit with the correct number of feathery leaves (megaphylls), and, ideally a dark green colour. Convinced of its market potential, I took the plant into tissue culture at Vitro Plus and propagated a small batch of plants.

WANTED NEVADA

It must have been the TPIE show of 1999 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where I showed the fern for the first time. I had a large poster depicting a giant desert cactus accompanied by a 'Wanted Nevada' tagline stuck to my booth's wall.

The message was that the plant could resist dehydration, and of course, the name Nevada perfectly referred to that. Following Nevada's debut at TPIE, Vitro Plus made an application for worldwide patent breeders rights for this super plant.

A KEEN EYE FOR DETAIL

Our opposite neighbour at this memorable TPIE edition was Alpha Foliage from Homestead. The company founded by the late Chuck Buster, a remarkable person. He must have seen something special in our plant, for he was the first person who wanted to test this new variety in the USA.

Chuck was an outstanding breeder and a sharp businessman with a keen eye for detail. At the time, his

company in Homestead was growing millions of Boston fern hanging baskets for the North American retail market, a quintessentially spring product.

EXCELLENT REVIEWS FROM SUPERMARKETS AND BUYERS

The Boston ferns were often packaged wet or damp, packed tightly in crates or boxes and then shipped for three to four days across the USA before being taken out of their packaging. Travelling for ferns usually deteriorates the quality quickly.

Chuck started growing small batches of 'Nevada' ferns among his regular Boston ferns and shipping them out to retailers.

Supermarkets and buyers were noticing a difference – the ferns from Chuck were arriving in great condition. The compliments kept coming, and initially, Chuck kept the excellent reviews to himself. The feedback was so positive that within a year, Chuck replaced his Boston ferns with 'Nevada' ferns.

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL GAIN

He also told me later that he could grow more plants per square metre because the 'Nevada' ferns do not get so entangled and also can plant out later, which is an additional financial gain.

Chuck had been able to keep his Nevada 'secret' to himself for a long



The original 'Nevada' mother clone is unique and indispensable for a reliable propagation process through tissue culture, because the propagation process starting from the original parent gives a much more reliable result than from the offspring of its parent, something which is generally known within the field of plant tissue culture.



time, but after a couple of seasons, word got out to fellow growers in the Homestead area, and they too began switching Boston ferns for 'Nevada' ferns. This change happened over the following years in the rest of America. Boston fern is still being grown, but only sparsely now.

CLONING AND TISSUE CULTURE

'Nevada' belongs to the species *Nephrolepis*, of which many varieties are in circulation. It all started with an 'archetypal

Convinced of its market potential, John Bijl took the plant into tissue culture at Vitro Plus and propagated a small batch of plants.

plant' from which all today's commercial *Nephrolepis* species have mutated. The archetypal plant itself is, as far as I know, extinct or maybe still alive in a botanical garden somewhere, who knows? New clones of ferns come from a genetic change in the DNA at the chromosome level, and these changes are always present in the background. Sometimes these changes occur in ferns, and we see a 'visible mutation', like a fringed or a differently incised leaf. With plant propagation, there is the genetic drift of the chromosomes, depending on the method of propagation, stronger or lesser, and in any case, strengthened by the use of plant hormones in tissue culture. Many changes are not visible phenotypically, but are present in the chromosomes and can influence the plant's well-being (root formation, growth rate, susceptibility to diseases etc.). These mutations occur in tissue culture, and as we are into a micro culture, we use plant hormones in the process; it has always been our expertise to keep the level of mutations as low as possible. However, they remain present in tissue culture, usually dormant and thus not visible, but sometimes they do emerge, and a breeder does not want this.

THERE IS ONLY ONE PURE NEVADA

My previous story explains why there is only one pure 'Nevada', which is, in fact, the mother plant that I discovered 20 years ago. All other Nevadas ever produced are offspring that can be genetically identical, but not always, and thus not always visible in the plant's appearance. The first 'Nevada' mother cuttings are hand taken every year, and every week Vitro Plus gathers mother material to use in the laboratory. Nobody else in the world has access to this excellent genetic material and the unique mother plant is kept and protected in a secret location. There is also a second location; a far distance from the first one, where we keep 'Nevada' to prevent any loss of original genetics if a natural disaster occurs.

RELIABLE FERN PROPAGATION

This unique 'Nevada' mother clone gives our fern breeders worldwide the guarantee that their starting material originates from the one and only 'Nevada' clone. It has proven to be rock-solid in the American fern industry over the past 20 years and is exclusively available at Vitro Plus. The original 'Nevada' mother clone is unique and indispensable for a reliable propagation process through tissue culture, because the propagation process starting from the original parent gives a much more reliable result than from the offspring of its parent, something which is generally known within the field of plant tissue culture. Vitro Plus cherishes this unique and original 'Nevada' clone and will continue to supply their customers worldwide with the best excellent starting material for many years to come. We are still trying to find an even stronger offspring of 'Nevada', but that is easier said than done. For the last 20 years, it has not yet happened again.

For more information, visit www.vitroplus.nl/marketing/marketing-videos



John Bijl founded Vitroplus, one of the world's most reputable fern companies, in 1990.

Nearly 500 gather to reconnect at 2021 FDC

As dawn broke over Miami on the morning of Monday, June 9, flower-packed vans and trucks began converging on the storied Doral resort. Their mission: transform a hotel ballroom into a wonderland showcasing the best that growers, manufacturers, wholesalers, and distributors have to offer. The highly anticipated return of the Table Top exhibitions was just one highlight of the Wholesale Florist and Florist Supplier Association's (WF&FSA's) 2021 Floral Distribution Conference.



AUTHOR: JASON VAUGHAN PHOTOS: WF&FSA

The 2021 three-day conference is considered the nation's first post-pandemic floral event. Almost 500 attendees gathered at Miami's Doral resort to display products, engage in educational programming, and reconnect for the first time for many since the last in-person conference held in November 2019.

"We did it, you did it. We collectively made this event happen," said DVFlora Vice President and 2019-2021 WF&FSA President Tim Dewey in his welcome to conference-goers. "I am confident you will be working toward making us all stronger together and better than ever."

TABLE TOP EXHIBITS

Monday's signature event was the opening of the 83 Table Top exhibits, which also served as the location for an opening night reception. Attendees laughed and reconnected, while also showcasing products and services to hundreds of wholesalers in attendance. Networking and reconnecting were critical elements in planning

the conference's schedule. Plenty of time was set aside for casual discussions, whether on the hotel's grand patio or in the Table Tops space. In the post-conference survey, an overwhelming majority of conference-goers (97 per cent) found networking good or excellent opportunities.

AUGUSTO SOLANO RECEIVES LELAND T. KINTZELE AWARD

WF&FSA President Dewey also provided his welcome and remarks at the Tuesday, June 8 luncheon. In another return to tradition, Dewey unveiled the winner of the Leland T. Kintzele Distinguished Service Award. The award recognises individuals who have made substantial contributions to the floral industry and have shown distinguished service exemplifying integrity, fairness, perseverance, and decisiveness. Dewey announced Asocolflores Executive President Augusto Solano as the recipient of the 2021 award.

"This is a real big surprise," Solano said as he accepted the award. "It's been a long journey with a



lot of challenges. Working for this industry with all the great people is a joy and privilege. This is something that really touches me, and I will keep this moment in my heart forever.”

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

After the award presentation, WF&FSA Executive Vice President Molly Alton Mullins introduced Armellini Logistics’ David Armellini and Prime Floral’s Brad Quinn to the luncheon stage. Both gentlemen provided a brief overview of the state of the nation’s trucking industry and the logistical challenges across almost all supply chains. Their insights provided background as Dewey and Alton Mullins moderated an interactive, casual discussion with members on the challenges (and opportunities) they face in today’s not-so-normal business environment. During this exchange, attendees provided their solutions on moving their businesses forward, which includes utilising WF&FSA Institute, an online workforce training and development tool.

After the luncheon, it was back to networking, checking out the floral exhibits, and getting ready for WF&FSA’s Together Again Party. The party was a fantastic opportunity for the WF&FSA community to network with each other, with entertainment all around, including carnival games and fun mementos like a vintage photo booth.

GABRIEL BECERRA IS WF&FSA’S NEW PRESIDENT

On the final day of the conference began with an attendee breakfast and WF&FSA’s business meeting. During the business meeting, Dewey thanked the outgoing board members Jeff Stoppenhagen (Gassafy Wholesale), Jason Lenz (Len Busch Roses), and Wendy Fowle (Staalduinen Floral) for their service to the association and its members. Additionally, two Executive Committee members terms also ended, Dave Legge (DWF Wholesale Florist) as treasurer, and Ben Powell (Mayesh) as immediate past president.

Gabriel Becerra is WF&FSA’s new president

Attendees unanimously approved the addition of five candidates to the board: Patrick Busch of Len Busch Roses (who will also serve on the Executive Committee), Karen Oie of Smithers-Oasis, Eric Fernandez of Continental Flowers, Scott Cheeseman of Kennicott, and Alice Givens of Carlstedt. Dewey then introduced Gabriel Becerra as WF&FSA’s new president. Becerra, president of Miami-based Golden Flowers, accepted the gavel and provided brief remarks to the audience. Becerra — no stranger to WF&FSA and the Floral Distribution Conference — is known for his colourful ‘Helping People Express Feelings with Flowers’ button. “There is no doubt that we are living in a special moment. Now is the time to think about the future,” Becerra said. “We have confirmed that what we do and what we offer every day is very relevant... We have seen all the challenges. We have overcome as we accomplish our purpose and mission as an industry.”

Following Becerra’s remarks, Dwight Larimer and Laura Shinall with the American Floral Endowment shared AFE’s celebration of its 60 years in operation and its campaign to raise \$60,000 in 60 days. The endowment funds research into a range of areas, including temperature-controlled supply chains, plant breeding, and pest and disease management. AFE also provides educational grants, scholarships and internships. The conference’s final (and very popular) presentation, “Helping Leaders Perform Better,” was given by leadership expert Mike Staver. He led WF&FSA members on an insightful and inspirational exploration on how to lead companies to success by focusing on three key points: living what matters most, getting the support you need, and taking back control. After a few more hours of Table Tops, WF&FSA’s 2021 Floral Distribution Conference came to a close. A brief survey of attendees found the conference to be of tremendous value; more than 95 per cent found it to be good or excellent, and 80 per cent say they are all in for next year’s Floral Distribution Conference in early spring 2022.

Investment in plant health and biosecurity for a resilient future

The AIPH International Plant Health Survey 2021 reveals the promise of a bio-secure future for the ornamental horticultural industry. It shows a strong commitment to plant health systems, with scope for an international framework.

AUTHOR: RACHEL WAKEFIELD PHOTO: MICHEL HEERKENS

The survey was initiated and conducted by the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH) in early 2021 as part of the International Year of Plant Health 2020 and in response to growing concerns about biosecurity worldwide and the ornamental horticulture industry's duty to sustainability. International travel and trade have tripled in volume in the last decade and has the potential to quickly spread pests and diseases around the world, causing significant damage to native plants and the environment. The survey aimed to explore how industry organisations work to enhance plant biosecurity in their regions and share information on voluntary systems to improve biosecurity within businesses and across supply chains. The Plant health industry support programmes have the capacity to enable healthy production systems, cost-effective and reliable movement of low-risk plant material within global supply chains, and traceability in the event of a biosecurity threat.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

Through the report, AIPH concluded:

- Voluntary standards are increasingly relied upon by industry and regulators to reduce the risk posed by plant pests for national or international trade. Eleven voluntary standards for Plant Health Management were identified from around the world. The highest



perceived level of threat from plant pests and diseases in a respondent's country or region was 'trade in live plants and cut flowers with the second-highest level being identified as 'growing systems'.

- There is a basis for creating an international equivalence framework between standards.
- Voluntary standards and associated schemes co-designed by industry and the competent (designated) authority for a country can augment phytosanitary measures and regulatory systems.

A 'systems approach' for plant biosecurity for nursery production systems and supply chain management was a key concept that emerged from the survey. More than three quarters (77.5 per cent) of those surveyed indicated a need for a voluntary international plant health and biosecurity standard. Systems approaches are proactive, aiming to reduce the risk of infestation by promoting the use of safe nursery practices for all pests, and are a fundamental aspect of voluntary standards as the requirements represent policies, procedures, and practices that are integrated into a business's day-to-day operations.

GLOBAL PLANT HEALTH FORUM

Tim Edwards, Vice President, AIPH, and Chair of the AIPH Ornamentals Production Committee says: "The report establishes the value of voluntary Plant Health Management schemes. We must now ask: How can the industry broaden uptake of such schemes? What must be done to allow schemes to each recognise and integrate with others? This report starts to identify areas in which Ornamental Horticultural Trade Associations around the globe can work collaboratively to strengthen biosecurity."

The recommendations highlight the need for further work to develop systems that integrate voluntary industry standards for plant health with national regulations that control the movement of plants across national and regional borders. This application can be achieved by close collaboration between leaders in the industry and national plant protection authorities (NPPOs). AIPH aims to set up a Global Plant Health Forum to facilitate information sharing and the development of consistency across supply chains.

For further information get in touch with Dr Audrey Timm, Technical Advisor at AIPH, audrey.gerber@aiph.org



FREE WEBINARS



Listen with a global audience

FloraCulture International magazine, supported by the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH), invites ornamental growers, traders, retailers, and suppliers to join our free webinars to hear anecdotes from industry leaders and participate in discussions.

The 2021 programme features **Mexican Horticultural Industry** on 14 September and **Wedding Market** on 25 October.

Past topics include supporting growers coming out of the Covid 19 crisis, understanding the Russian flower market, understanding ornamental horticulture in China and sustainable growing media. You can watch recordings of past events at leisure on the FCI YouTube channel.

Hosted by



Upcoming webinars

Mexican Horticultural Industry — 14 September

Wedding Market — 25 October

For global sponsorship opportunity get in touch with Angie Duffree
Email: angie@floracultureinternational.com



**EXPO
2023
DOHA
QATAR**



**إكسبو
2023
الدوحة
قطر**

International Horticultural Exhibition

2nd October 2023 – 28th March 2024



**Modern
Agriculture**



**Technology
& Innovation**



**Environmental
Awareness**



Sustainability



   @Expo2023qatar

www.dohaexpo2023.gov.qa



Bureau
International
des Expositions



AIPH