



20 YEARS OF INNOVATION

industry leadership

Guiding Stars

Dedication and innovation has made our industry strong. As part of our 20th anniversary celebration, we've identified 20 leading growers, allied industry representatives, and academics who have made their mark the last 20 years. It was very hard to limit ourselves to 20 in each category. We could have easily extended the lists to 40. We're pleased the floriculture industry continues to be blessed with leadership that endures over time while launching new rising stars.

20 Leading Growers



Ken and Deena Altman, Altman Plants, Vista, CA – This California couple began their business 25 years ago with a small hobby nursery selling cacti through mail order and to small nurseries. Today with locations in California and Florida, Altman Plants ranks No. 20 on our *Top 100 Growers* and produces a wide range of annuals, perennials, grasses, cacti, succulents, foliage, and poinsettias for mass merchants and home improvement chains. More recently, the company has launched Floragem – a marketing company representing a network of 30 wholesale growers who produce exclusive lines of branded plants – Garden Music perennials and flowering plants and VIVA! Herbs and Veggies.

Paul & Dale Bachman, Bachman's, Minneapolis, MN – This family has made Bachman's the floral brand in greater Minneapolis and one of the leading floral and garden center retailers in the country. They were ahead of their time in destination retailing, customer service, and creating publicity. Active in both garden center and florist circles, the brothers have been leaders and supporters of the Society of American Florists and American Nursery & Landscape Association and were proponents of PromoFlor.



Gene Batson, Batson's Greenhouse, Mt. Dora, FL – Featured as our sister magazine, *Ornamental Outlook's* Operation of the Year in 2001, Gene Batson and his family have done much for Florida's foliage industry. In addition to being strong supporters of the Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association, they have brought new growers into the business by teaching them how to run turnkey operations. In 1997, he and wife Barbara donated land and a greenhouse to fund an internship program at the University of Florida.

Kurt Bluemel, Kurt Bluemel Inc., Baldwin, MD – Past president of Perennial Plant Association, Kurt Bluemel commercialized the use of ornamental grasses in landscapes. In addition to his operation in Maryland, he owns Floraland Farms in Florida.

FANTASTIC FAMILY: VAN WINGERDEN

The Van Wingerden family brought the industrial revolution to greenhouses in America by applying state-of-the-art Dutch technology to U.S. practices. Aart and Cora Van Wingerden came to the United States from Holland in 1948 with \$6 in their pockets and three children.



They built greenhouses in New Jersey and other states before establishing a home base for Van Wingerden International in Fletcher, NC. The couple raised 16 children, 15 of whom are still in the industry today and have become leaders in their own right. Aart contributed greatly to improvements in greenhouse systems and pioneered soilless mixes, plastic packs and flats, double poly greenhouses, cart transportation, and plugs.

His children have taken the industrial revolution to the next level with state-of-the-art automation and distribution systems and excel at serving the mass market. Son John, whose family owns Green Circle Growers, founded sister brokerage company Express Seed with Ron Pierre and has been a strong voice mobilizing growers. Green Circle has emerged as a dominant plug supplier. Son Tom, whose family owns Metrolina Greenhouses, is known for state-of-the-art finished plant production in the largest single greenhouse facility – 80 acres. Tom has invented equipment himself, including the Metroplanter transplanter.

