

TAMPA BAY WHOLESALE GROWERS HISTORY

by

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(Additions by TBWG staff)

The Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers, LAA is composed of wholesale production nurseries in Hillsborough County, Florida. The purpose of the association is to promote harmony and goodwill among its members, to promote greater interest in the use of plants, to achieve common goals and solve common problems, and to set a high standard of business ethics for the nursery industry in Hillsborough County.

Members of the Association meet once each month to conduct normal business and participate in educational programs planned and presented by the Association's program planned committee. Meetings are held at member nurseries. The host nursery is responsible for the meat dish and drinks. Members usually bring a covered dish.

All phases of the ornamental plant production industry are represented by members of the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers including: Container and field grown woody ornamentals, foliage plants, bedding plants, flowering pot plants, fruit trees, liners, and sod.

The ornamental plant production industry in Hillsborough County is known statewide for quality plants and cooperative spirit. The non-competitive atmosphere among nurserymen in Hillsborough County has created a unique and popular environment for Southeastern United States buyers of ornamental plants.

In 1973, a small group of production nurserymen (Roy Davis, Albert Crosby, Paul DuBose, Paul Elliott, Joe Gramling, Archie Hamlin, Winfred Harrell, Richard Pless, Donald Bailey, Ellis Wilson, and Roger Newton- Extension Agent) met at Wilson's Wholesale Nursery in Dover, Florida to discuss common problems and potential regulations regarding water use. During the next year the group met on an irregular basis and attended SWFWMD workshops. The group actively opposed regulations on use of water for irrigation and made several presentations at SWFWMD workshops.

In 1974, the group elected its first chairman, Donald Bailey, Vet's Wholesale Nursery. At that time twenty (20) production nurseries were active in the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers. From the 1974 membership, seven (7) nurseries remain active in 1999: Baker's Nursery, Archie Hamlin Nursery, Harrell's Nursery, Skewlee Road Nursery, Tampa Wholesale Nursery, Vet's Wholesale Nursery, and Wilson's Wholesale Nursery.

The Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers was originally a committee of the Tampa Bay Chapter of the Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association in 1979 when by-laws were written and the organization became a Limited Agricultural Association with FNGA membership no longer required.

In 1979, the West Central Chapter of the Florida Foliage Association became inactive and members of the chapter were invited to become members of TBWG. Several foliage production operations including two out-of-county firms became members of TBWG. These two firms were grandfathered membership at the time of by-laws adoption which limited membership only to Hillsborough County production nurseries.

In 1974, the TBWG began to actively promote the area as a major producer of ornamental plants. A one sheet flyer was printed featuring a listing of the member nurseries on one side and a location map on the reverse side. The flyer was designed by Eugene Barnes, local landscape architect.

In 1975, the first plant locator was published. The one page locator listed 30 plants with each nursery indicating which plants were produced. The 1976-77 ornamental plant locator was printed in book format.

The ornamental plant locator was printed annually until 1992 when a spring and fall edition was begun. At that time the format of the locator was changed to include quantity and quality information. The name was changed to Plant Availability Locator (PAL). Two primary distribution times existed for the PAL: Spring Edition – Tampa Spring Expo; Fall Edition – Florida Nurserymen and Allied Trade Show. Approximately 20,000 copies of the locator were printed annually at a cost of approximately \$27,000. A survey in 1989 indicated the ornamental plant locator was responsible for \$856,411.44 in increased sales in 1988. The TBWG Ornamental Plant Locator was the first of its kind published by a nursery association in the state. Today, more than fifteen such publications exist. The PAL became an annual publication again in 1997 due to high production and distribution costs.

In 1983, the marketing sub-committee of the Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension Service Ornamental Plant Advisory Committee began discussing the need for a spring trade show for nurserymen to exhibit plant material. Tony Aries – Armenia Nursery and others promoted the spring trade show idea as the best time of year for retail nurseries and landscapers to purchase ornamental plants. Members of this sub-committee included: Roy Davis, Paul DuBose, Dale Baker, Ross Elsberry, Floyd Boone, Joe Keel, Ron Arkay, Burns Warfield, and Lynn Selke. Much discussion occurred concerning the show in 1983. The committee was proceeding to hold the show as a cooperative extension service activity in 1984. As show planning progressed and the budget accelerated, it was determined that an outside sponsor should be secured. At their November, 1983 meeting, the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers agreed to sponsor the show and selected Roy Davis and Joe Keel as co-chairmen. In November, 1983 Roy Davis contacted the FNGA State Board of Directors and asked FNGA for staff administrative support to develop, coordinate and promote the trade show. The Board of Directors approved the request with conditions. The TBWG did not accept the conditions and hired Bette Walker as Trade Show Coordinator. The first Tampa Bay Horticultural Trade Show was held at the Florida State Fairgrounds and through 1992. The Florida State Fair authority cancelled the Trade Show contract to become the Tampa Bay Lightning's (hockey team) home. The show was moved to the Tampa Convention Center in 1993 and back to the Fairgrounds in 1998.

Participation in the trade show by ornamental plant nurseries was limited to six Tampa Bay counties from 1985 to 1987. From 1988 to 1990 participation was limited to thirteen

counties. Starting in 1991, participation was not limited. The show strived for a 60% nursery and 40% allied participation. Following is a summary of the shows held to date.

Year	Booths	Exhibitors	Seminar	Paid Att	Total Att	Sales
1985	101	85		1,722	2,302	\$759,994
1986		121		2,028	2,893	773,706
1987		137		2,103	2,925	1,769,312
1988		159		1,522	2,441	2,050,210
1989		181	167	1,669	2,881	1,809,477
1990		186	209	1,879	2,905	3,938,550
1991		218	321 (3)	1,712	3,417	4,046,734
1992		221	215 (3)	1,524	3,803	2,046,734
1993	355	244	228 (2)	2,185	3,944	3,355,752
1994	362	245	135 (2)	1,899	3,666	5,248,752
1995	349	239	320 (4)	1,218	3,514	3,892,851
1996	342	237	525 (5)	2,264	3,657	5,058,142
1997	344	241	609 (5)	1,033	3,488	2,837,081
1998	342	229	500	668	2,983	3,090,584
1999	305	215	407	1,981	3,065	2,765,951
2000	321	229	425	1,578	3,773	5,295,167
2001	336	233	499	1,385	3,263	4,345,336
2002	356	237	516	1,363	3,281	2,978,054
2003	362	253	435	1,052	2,850	3,161,978
2004	362	253	420	1,854	3,021	2,523,279
2005	355	234	513	1,784	2,997	3,040,050
2006	361	240	440	1,743	2,987	6,874,800
2007	360	245	458	1,692	2,952	5,543,370
2008	350	244	334	1,375	2,629	3,222,608
2009	365	236	297	1,104	2,135	2,719,075

From 1984 to 1987, Bette Walker conducted the business of the Tampa Bay Horticultural Trade Show from her spare bedroom. In 1987, the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers rented office space on Gunn Highway in Tampa and occupied a small suite of offices. Bette Walker was named Executive Director of the Association and responsibilities expanded, in addition to trade show coordination, to include association administrative duties. The association moved office in 1992 to Ehrlich Road in Tampa.

In 1994, under the leadership of Lloyd O'Hara, a long range planning committee was formed. The membership completed an extensive survey designed to assist the committee in setting the direction of the Association through the year 2000. However, no action was taken on the results of the survey and the plan was not developed until 1998 under the leadership of J. C. Tort. The plan was formally adopted in September 1998.

In November 1996, Bette Walker announced her intentions to retire and President Rick Hill appointed a committee to solicit and interview a replacement. Applications were received and interviews took place in January 1997. Hugh Gramling, son of one of the original founders, was hired as executive director. He began work in February 1997 and had a 30-day overlap with Walker.

The office had been located on Ehrlich Road in Tampa for the primary convenience of Bette Walker. At her retirement, a search was started to locate the office more convenient to the majority of the membership. In July 1998, a building was selected and the office was moved to 1311 South Parsons Avenue in Seffner. The office became a meeting place for association committees.

In 1998, a plan for the establishment, maintenance and utilization of the reserve fund was developed. The association had built a sizable reserve fund (approximately \$110,000) during the Bette Walker years. The plan was written by the Executive Committee under Tort's administration. The plan established target funding levels, uses of the money, whom has control and how the money is to be invested.

In 2003, President Gerald Barron recognized the inability of the association to continue maintaining its position with the dues structure in place since the beginning of the Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers. Barron appointed a committee of the cross section of the membership to analyze the dues. The committee recommended to the membership at its Nov. 11, 2003 meeting a dues increase which was accepted unanimously.

Arata Expositions was the selected as the decorator for the Tampa Spring Expo in the second year of the show and maintained the contract for more than 20 years. All but the last two years of the contract, Jimmie Gilbert served as the liaison between the show and the decorator. In 2008, a new company, FM Convention Services from Orlando was selected as the decorator. Gilbert had been hired by FM and again was in charge of the show.

In 2008, TBWG Executive Director Hugh Gramling was appointed by Gov. Charlie Crist to serve a four-year term on the Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

In February 2009, the membership amended its rules to create a new membership class named Associate Member. Pressure from nurseries not meeting any of the various requirements for full membership and allied firms created the environment to gather member support. Associate members were not given a vote at membership meeting but were allowed to serve and chair association committees. They also were not given listings in the Plant Availability Locator but would have company name and contact information on the web site and in the Locator. Dues were set at a flat rate of \$150 per year. The first firm to apply and be accepted was Sharp's Tree Farm. Also accepted at the same meeting were Signature Supply Inc, Graco Fertilizer Company, and Farm Credit of Central Florida.

The worst economic conditions in the lifetime of the association were experienced in 2008-09. The crash in the housing market caused a crash in all construction and had a ripple effect throughout the economic structure of the U.S. Sales in Spring 2009 were estimated to

be down more than 60% over the record year in 2006-07. Several founding members of TBWG were unable to sustain their business and ceased to exist.

**TAMPA BAY WHOLESALE GROWERS
LEADERSHIP & MEMBERS HISTORY**

Year	Members	President
1974-75	20	Donald Bailey
1975-76	20	Donald Bailey
1976-77	21	Leta Davis
1977-78	18	Paul DuBose
1978-79	22	Norm Wallace
1979-80	34	Roy Davis
1980-81	43	Jerry Wetherington
1981-82	54	Marshall Meyer
1982-83	60	Paul Elliott
1983-84	58	Steve Davis
1984-85	58	Matt Powers
1985-86	59	Patty Maney
1986-87	57	John Carter
1987-88	67	Don Maynard
1988-89	69	David Wadsworth
1989-90	67	Floyd Boone
1990-91	70	Mel Marsh
1991-92	71	John Carter
1992-93	77	Jim Niblett
1993-94	74	Jim Niblett
1994-95	77	Lloyd O'Hara
1995-96	79	Lloyd O'Hara
1996-97	79	Rick Hill
1997-98	83	J.C. Tort
1998-99	84	J.C. Tort
1999-00	82	Brenda Shamblin
2000-01	85	Brenda Shamblin
2001-02	85	Gerald Barron
2002-03	88	Gerald Barron
2003-04	82	Greg Shiver
2004-05	79	Doug Meyer
2005-06	76	Sean Phelps
2006-07	71	Vincent Tort
2007-08	69	Steve Davis
2008-09	63	Steve Davis

**TAMPA BAY WHOLESALE GROWERS
TAMPA BAY HORTICULTURAL TRADE SHOW & TAMPA SPRING EXPO
CHAIRMEN**

Year	Chairman
1985	Roy Davis & Joe Keel
1986	Roy Davis & Joe Keel
1987	Burns Warfield
1988	John Carter
1989	Don Maynard
1990	David Wadsworth
1991	David Wadsworth
1992	Mel Marsh
1993	J.C. Tort
1994	Lloyd O'Hara
1995	J.C. Tort
1996	Rick Hill
1997	Ron Croone
1998	Johnny Thompson
1999	Gerald Barron
2000	Terry Elsberry
2001	Charlie Hinton
2002	Greg Shiver
2003	Jim Haggard
2004	Sean Phelps
2005	Doug Meyer
2006	Vincent Tort
2007	Shawn Steed
2008	John Pearson
2009	John Pearson

**TAMPA BAY WHOLESALE GROWERS
MEMBERSHIP**

Nursery	Membership Years
A+ Growers	1997
A&G Palms	1990 -
Alafia Tropical Foliage	1976 – 1977, 1979 -
All-Weather Nursery	1985 – 1988
Amplex	2004 -
Aoki Cycad Nursery/ Aoki Sago Nursery	1987 - 2003
Arborgate Farms, Inc.	1995 – 1998
* Archie Hamlin Nursery, Inc.	1974 – 1975, 1979 - 2008

Arlene's Nursery	2000 -
Ashmore Farms, Inc.	2003 - 2008
B. Church Farms, Inc.	1987 - 1991
B.T.R. Elsberry Inc.	1997 - 2008
*Baker's Nursery, Inc.	1974 -
Basically Groundcovers (BGC Specialties)	1993 - 2004
Beautiful Plants by Charlie	1982 -
Bennet's Liners & Nursery	1995 - 1999
Big Tree Nursery	1983 -
Black & Baker, Inc.	1983 - 1985
Bo Enterprises	1997 - 2002
Boone's Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1980
*Buxton's Wholesale Nursery	1974 - 1993
C & J Nursery, Inc.	1987 - 1988
Camarra's Landscape Nursery, Inc.	1997
Caple's Nursery	1999 - 2005
Carencia Tree Farm & Nursery	1999
Casa Verde, Inc.	1979
Cecil's Nursery	1981 - 1985
Cedar Tree Farm	1990 -
Celebration Turf	2002 - 2005
Charlie's Plant Farm, Inc.	1982 - 1998
Citrus Park Nursery	1995 -
Coile's Green Leaf Nursery	1979 - 1982
*Cowgill Nurseries	1974 - 1976; 1979 - 1986
Croone's Nursery	1992 - 1998
*Crosby Nurseries, Inc.	1974 - 1975
Culbreath Landscape Nursery	1978 - 1984
Cruz Nursery	2001
D & S Plants	1980 - 1989
D.R. Ellinor Citrus Nursery	1989 -
Davis Farms	1979 - 1996
*Davis Wholesale Nursery	1974 - 1975
Dawn to Dusk Nursery	1995 -
Dennard Nursery	1980
*Dossey's Greenhouses	1974 - 1975 ___ - 1998
Double D Nursery	1985 - 1991
Drymon's Plant Nursery Inc.	2001
*DuBose Landscape Nursery	1974 - 1985
E & S Nursery	1983
*Elliott's Wholesale Nursery	1974 - 1992
Elsberry Greenhouse, Inc. / TurfGrass America	1979 - 2006
Emerald Hill Nursery	1991 - 2000; 2000 -
Enviro Plants	1987
Epps Nursery, Inc.	1981 -
Fern Lake Nursery	1989 -

Florida Azalea Specialists	1991 - 2003
Florida Best Nursery & Landscape	2000 - 2006
Florida Tree Source	2000 -
Florida Wholesale Nursery	2001
Forbes Road Nursery	1983 – 1987
Forte Nursery	1979 -
Free's Nursery	1993 -
Fulwood Enterprises, Inc.	1981 – 1983
Fulwood-Nanney, Inc.	1980
Gaither's Nursery	1981 – 1986
Garden Lane Ornamentals, Inc.	1979
Gin-Jer Nursery	1975 – 1976
*Gramling Nursery, Inc.	1974 – 1976; 1978 – 1992
Green Tree Landscape Nursery, Inc.	1981 - 2006
Greenhouse Ventures	2001
*Griffin & Harris Nursery	1974 – 1975
Griffin Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1976 - 2006
Hallmark Nursery	1987
Hand Grown Nursery, Inc.	1980 -
Hardy Tree Farm	2004 -
Harrell's Liner Farm	1996
*Harrell's Nursery, Inc.	1974 – 1975; 1981 -
Heritage Nursery & Tree Farm	1992 – 1998
Hillsboro Wholesale Nursery	1977 – 1984
Hill's Greenhouse	1985 – 1986
Hill's Raingreen Tropicals	1996
Holly Lane Tree Farms	1987 - 2008
Holmberg Farms, Inc.	1993 -
Horticultural Products, Inc.	1995 - 1999
Howard & Lynn's Line Nursery	1992 - 2005
Holmberg Citrus Nursery	1975 – 1976
Hudson Nursery – Wholesale Division	1987 - 2003
I-4 Plant Land	1984 -
J-SLAC Nursery, Inc.	2005 -
J & R Nursery	1987 – 1992; 1994 -
Jackson's Nursery	1980 – 1982
James Ranch	1982 - 2002
Keel's Nursery & Greenhouses, Inc.	1988 - 2002
Kim's Wholesale Nursery	1990 -
King Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1988 - 2002
La Bella Mia	1997 - 2005
Lady Bug Foliage, Inc.	1982 - 2001
Landmark Nursery	1992 - 1997
Landscape Flower Growers Inc.	2001
Long's Finer Foliage	1982 – 1993
Lowe's Wholesale Nursery	1981 – 1988

Loyd & Rings Wholesale Nursery	1987 – 1998
Lucky “S” Farm Nursery	1994 -
Lutz Wholesale Nursery	1982 -
M & J Nursery	2002
M & U Farms	1981
MacDonald Training Center, Inc.	1978 – 1981
McMullen Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1988 -
Mel’s Quality Foliage	1976 – 1977
Merrill M. Rogers Nursery	1976 – 1977
Meyer’s Nurseries, Inc.	1976 -
Myer’s Nursery	1980 -
Mid-Florida Greenhouses, Inc.	1985
Midway Foliage	1979 – 1986
*Midway Nursery	1974
Mother’s Finest Wholesale Nursery	1980 – 1985
Myers’ Plant Nursery	1992 -
Napoli’s Nursery	1981 – 1983
Niblett’s Nursery	1985 -
Oakdale Nursery	1977 – 1978
Oakfield Greenhouse Nursery	1978
Oakwood Wholesale Nursery	1992 -
Owens, Inc.	1979
Palms of Plant City	1997
Parkesdale Greenhouses & Nursery	1980 – 1990
Pate’s Nursery	1981; 1989
Pearson Agricultural Land Management, Inc./Stardust Farms	1997
Phoenix Greenhouses, Inc.	1991 – 1998
Pine Lake Nursery	2002
Plant City Wholesale Nursery	2006
Plant Ranch	1980 – 1997
Planters Crib	1992 - 2001
Plants of Ruskin, Inc.	1979 - 2005
Platt’s Nursery	1987 – 1992
Pleasant View Wholesale Nursery	1980 – 1992
*Pless Nursery	1974 – 1976; 1979 – 1985
*Pope’s Nursery	1974 – 1978
Poppa John’s Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1984 – 1989
Poppell’s Greenhouse Enterprises, Inc.	1979 – 1991
Post Plant Nursery	2000 - 2003
Quality Grassing & Services Nursery	1992
Quality Lawn Work – Wholesale Division	1998 - 2003
Rainbow Wholesale Nursery	1986 – 1991; 1993 - 2006
Reeder’s Nursery & Tree Farm	1986 -
Reynold’s Nursery, Inc.	1981 -
Riverview Flower Farm, Inc.	1984 -

Robert's Nursery, Inc.	1982 -
S & H Nursery	1987 – 1990
Sibley's Liner Farm	1987 – 1993
Simonds Nursery	1990 -
Si Simonds Wholesale Nursery	1982 -
*Skewlee Road Nursery, Inc.	1974 -
South Bay Growers	1988 – 1997
Speedling Nursery	2003
Spring Valley Tree Farm	2000 - 2008
Steve's Ferns	1995 – 1996
Steven's Nursery	1999
Storck's Nursery	2001
Strickland Blueberry Farm	1999
Sun City Tree Farm	1988 -
Suncoast Greenhouses, Inc.	1986 -
Suncoast Plant Nursery	1981 -
Sunshine Wholesale Nursery	1989 -
Tampa Liner Farms, Inc.	1978 – 1979
Tampa Tropical Growers	1991 -
*Tampa Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1974 -
Tapley's Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1982 – 1985
The Misting Shed	1987 -
Three Pines	2004 -
Tom's Ferns & Pothos	1996 - 2001
Tornello Landscape Corp.	1992 -
Tree of Life Nursery, Inc.	1981 - 2002
Tree Tops	1987 - 2003
Treesareus	1999 - 2003
Tri County	1979
Tropical Foliage	1997
Turkey Creek Nursery	1995 -
Umiker's Nursery	1982
United Foliage	1976 – 1978; 1981 – 1982
Velva Dean's Tropicals	1979 – 1980; 1982 - 1999
* Vet's Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1974 - 2008
*Wetherington Plant Nursery	1974 – 1986
Wetherwood Nursery	1978 -
Whole Earth Nursery	1978 – 1984
Wiggin's & Sons Wholesale Nursery	1980 – 1984
*Wilson's Wholesale Nursery, Inc.	1974 - 2004
Wood's Tree Farm	2003
Wynn's Foliage	1986 – 1993

* Charter Member

**Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers
Associate Members**

Sharp's Tree Farm & Nursery Inc.	2009
Signature Supply Inc.	2009
Farm Credit of Central FL	2009
Graco Fertilizer Company	2009

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