

## REEL 3

### Interview with Jack Williams

**00:00.30:10**

Jack Williams

I think there's a couple things about it that are different. First of all, gardeners, the consumer of our product is getting more sophisticated. You know, gardening once again is in fashion, that's happened as a result of all the wonderful media things that have happened, you see HDTV, you see Martha Stewart and Better Homes and Gardens, all these magazines and all these publications really bringing gardening back. We see it as, you know, it's been considered as the number one leisure time activities in the nation, and so there's a whole new level of interest. My grandmother was a gardener, she knew her plants, she knew how to make things happen, she worked her garden. My parents didn't have the luxury of that time because of their jobs. I see the changes that people are wanting to go back to gardening but they want it simpler. They don't have to take the years of experience and trial by error. They're willing to spend the money on good plant material but they want to be successful. Well, brand programs are a way to call out good plant material. How to differentiate yourself from the crowd, so one plant is not the same as another. And again, as we've already talked about, the trialing and the development and all the things that have gone into making this petunia better than that petunia, you have to help get people to that petunia if that's what you want them to buy. And once they experience that and see that that plant performs and does well in their garden, you can bet that they're going to be back again time after time to repeat that success. So brand programs are a way for us to call that out. Another example, how much do you pay for coffee if you go to the Seven Eleven, how much do you pay for coffee if you go to Starbucks. It's the same basic ingredients, but it's how it is processed, it's how it is prepared, it's how it is presented. A big difference. And for that difference, a lot of people are willing to pay consistently and repeatedly and they build that loyalty. And what we're hoping to do with the flower fields is to prove to people that the plants are better. Plain and simple. They perform, they're going to make a colorful statement, you're going to be happy with the results. You'll be back year after year to try the new things that come along and continue to repeat with your old friends that you meet through that process. But consistently tie you back together, tell you what it is, where to find it, and the brand program does that.

## REEL 3

**00:03.47:30**

Here at the Paul Ecke Ranch, we're especially proud of a lot of our plants, but this one in particular, this is a new poinsettia that will be named pink ribbon. And the pink ribbon poinsettia is a unique, new, style of poinsettia that will actually be a part of Susan G. Coleman plant for the cure foundation. What that is is the proceeds that come from the plant, money from the sale from the cuttings to growers, and money from the retailers that feature this plant will actually go to the foundation to sponsor breast cancer research monies and so this foundation has focused on pink plants that are especially designated for the program and sold to specific retailers and this is our latest edition. We are proud that this is our first plant in this program and it needed to be a pink one, but not just any pink one. And you can see this one is especially beautiful, has some nice characteristics and we think it will be a hit out there but besides being just a beautiful poinsettia, it's a plant that really has a cause, and will promote and support a cause.

Mark Freeman

How long does it take to.....

Jack Williams

Well this is actually, this plant is a part of a whole type of poinsettias that are known as winter rose, and you can see from this wonderful curved brack shape and unusual formation, that our breeder worked on for over 34 years. Now that's an unusual for a plant to have that much attention put behind it, but he was passionate about this style of plant and getting to a form that could be brought into the commercial market. Four years ago, we introduced the first form of this and it was a pure red, and since then we've developed pinks and whites and other colors as well, but this one when we saw it we knew had to go for something truly unique and special and we're very pleased to be part of the program and be able to offer this. Will be in retailers not this year, but the year 2002. And beyond, and identified as pink ribbon.

**00:06.25:10**

### REEL 3

This is what we all think of when we think of poinsettias. Beautiful blooming plant, magnificent in color. It's a long way from here to here. But that's what our job is, after we've done the breeding and the developing and the coming up with new varieties, we have to produce the cuttings, and again this is a vegetative cutting of the poinsettia. This has been harvested from a mother plant, so that the plant that results will be identical to the characteristics of the mother plant. Currently, we are growing our mother plants in Guatemala and Mexico as our two major stock locations and there are some real nice reasons for being there. First of all where we are located, we are up high in the mountains where the air is very clean, the light is very intense and bright and that all results in wonderful plant growth. We want to produce the healthiest, strongest cuttings we can so that they are able to be shipped, propagated, which means putting roots on the plant so that plant can be can then be grown on, and eventually become the flowering plant that we all think of when we think of poinsettias. But why Guatemala, why Mexico, why would we go to those locations. Again, as I already said, the climate, because of its altitude because of the light and the temperature of the central American countries where it is very uniform year round allows us to grow those plants and get strong healthy plants that will root well and grow well for our customers. That's a very important factor for us. Weather here in southern California is not bad, but as we go through the year, it does change, our light levels change dramatically and our temperatures change enough that it impacts the growth of the mother plants. Being in a very uniform climate year round allows us to have uniform quality year round and that's important for our crop production. Once we harvest a cutting, the cutting is brought here to California where we will place them in this foam wedge and root them. This process takes about four weeks and now this is a fully functioning independent plant that can be then planted by the grower, grown up into a larger, fuller plant that will eventually bloom and be the plant that you see here in the market at Christmas. This is our job at Paul Ecke ranch is to create new varieties and to create the cuttings necessary to make this all happen.

**00:08.54:00**

Sure, absolutely, there are other advantages to being in Guatemala. And some of those as we've already talked about being the climate and the conditions and the quality of plants that can be produced certainly we have the advantages of labor and also the value of the land. Here in California, land is getting very expensive. Urbanization has moved in and it makes it

### REEL 3

very infeasible to stay here and continue to produce other than in the facilities that we already have. For growth to happen, we can't do that effectively here and keep the cost of our product down. We could certainly do that but the cost of our cuttings would go up and the cost of the blooming plants would go up and everyone would be impacted. Guatemala and countries like that in central America offer us the advantage that in addition to climate, the other good things labor is less expensive, I won't say cheap because the people are well paid and especially in scale for what is happening in the country. They are well trained and we are spending a lot of time to make the same protocols that we do here happen in Guatemala so the quality of the cutting, the quality of the employee is equal and so it has given us the advantage to do it all at a lower cost than what we would incur if we did it here in California.

**00:27.12:15**

Paul Ecke

..Of us in the field you'll see the production workers for this farm. And this is a working farm. We have this tourist attraction in the front, but fundamentally this is a farm and this is what today we call (can't make out the next couple of words) tourism and that is .... A working farm.... And out into the fields, see what's going on and enjoy being a part of nature which most people don't get to do. We're very fortunate here because of the location it's right next to this federal highway, highway 5, and we're just a half mile off the highway. And people can come and park and come and enjoy an afternoon or an all day experience if they choose to. Most people come to see the beauty of the renunculars(?) that are in bloom this time of year and it's a beautiful sight, it is something that there isn't anything else like it in the world except maybe Holland when the tulips are in bloom but there it's usually raining and cold. Generally, here, in this part of southern California it's sunny without rain during the blooming season which is the month of April and May, we've had exceptions to that of course.

**00:28.39:05**

My sense is that what they're doing right now is harvesting some blooms, to use for the wholesale floor market, on the other hand they may be cutting some special ones for the flower fields display here at the ranch in Encinitas

### REEL 3

I'm not quite sure but they are harvesting the blooms of these plants in the field.

Created this circles situation and we call it a work in progress, he has a grander plan for the future but for a first shot at using him, Gary, as an artist to create something floral is around a unique experience and this has gotten a lot of publicity and play in the art world. People are very very anxious to see whether an artist would do if he wanted to create a floral garden rather than a garden designer who would create something here.

**00:30.28:00**

Mostly the bulb crops in the field which we'll see we then last year built this garden center for the Armstrong nursery people and now they have put in a great rose garden which we'll see in a moment, which is not only the all American rose plants being tested this year and for the next two years, but there are examples of all the winners of the all American rose selection since 1940, probably the only place, western United States, where you can see every national rose winner for each year in one place. And that's gotta be a very very nice thing for the Armstrong people when this comes into bloom later this spring and summer because the firm originally started as a rose breeding company.

Our family acquired this property in the early 1950s and when I got out of college, one of my first jobs with the family business was to work on this property that had been mostly bean fields and we acquired some water and then started to grow some poinsettias, this field where this renunculars are now was certainly the best soil in any part of the world and we grew beautiful poinsettia plants out in the field, in those days we moved our poinsettia plants around and some years it would be flowers some years poinsettias, some years tomatoes, some years renunculars. We rotated the ground with various farmers in the area and then when we took our poinsettias and went inside the greenhouses in the 60s, we didn't need for production of field growing poinsettia plants so we leased it to tomato growers and others. Then about five years ago we got back into this renuncular business that was started by Ed Frizee about 50 years before. And so now we have these bulb crops that are grown here in partnership with the Milano family and it was a beginning of what became our brand of our new spring crops that are called our flower fields brand. This is a beautiful spot, just the right amount of sunshine, the humidity and the

### REEL 3

temperature, it is really the best place in the United States to grow these bulbs and Ed Frizee who has grown bulbs and has seen bulbs grown all over the world, absolutely says that this is the number one spot to grow this particular crop and we believe it because we have seen crops elsewhere, even in California, and they don't compare with what we can do on this soil here, it's a special blend of sandy soil, but the humidity from the ocean, the temperature, you put it all together and this is the prime spot. And so that's why we're delighted that we're here and expect to be here for a long time because we have made a pact with the city of Carlsbad saying that we will farm this land in flowers into perpetuity, whatever period of time that it. so the way it works is we plant the bulbs in the fall and they grow during the winter and they finally come into bloom in the middle of March and that all depends on the temperature in the spring, and that all depends on the amount of sunshine and rain and then as soon as they come into bloom, then we're ready for the tourist season.