

Capital Letter



■ Newsmakers



Dean

Wadsworth Control Systems Inc. has named **Gary Dean** president of the company. Dean replaces his father, **George Dean**, who celebrated his 50th year at Wadsworth last October. George Dean will continue to advise the company on a consulting basis.

Joe Kunkel has been named product manager at Blooms of Bressingham. In his new role, he will refine systems and practices to facilitate the flow of information from breeders to growers in North America and around the world.

Monty C. McCoy recently took over all global IS activities for Syngenta's S & G Flowers.

Mike Kovalycsik has joined the Delta T Solutions team as its Eastern regional sales manager. He has more than 17 years experience in the greenhouse industry.

Hamilton Engineering Inc. has appointed **Jake Mailey** as its Western United States regional sales manager. Based in Southern California, he will work with customers in Arizona, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii and British Columbia.

The Scotts Company Professional Business Group hired **Karen Stringer** and **Timothy Brubaker** as territory managers. Stringer's territory includes Southern California, Southern Nevada and Arizona. She also will manage specialty CRF products for the strawberry industry within her territory. Brubaker's territory consists of Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Foreign Worker Program Hits Cap – Already

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has already cut off the flow of foreign workers to service sector employers. In a Jan. 4 press release, USCIS said it had received enough H-2B guest worker petitions to meet the cap of 66,000 workers. The H-2B visa program allows employers to hire foreign workers to perform temporary nonagricultural work that is seasonal or intermittent.

"We expect an even larger number of landscape and landscape distribution businesses to be negatively impacted than when the program was shut down in March of 2004," says John Meredith, director of legislative relations for the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA). "The fact the cap was hit earlier this year than last underscores the urgent need to find a permanent solution to the problem while comprehensive reform is being developed."

For more on the issue and what you can do to help, go to www.anla.org.

Taking Action

Thinking about hosting a site tour for local lawmakers or making contact in some way? The Society of American Florists (SAF) has a few tips to keep in mind when planning an event or making the first steps toward talking with lawmakers.

- Plan ahead: Before you visit with or invite a lawmaker to your business, submit a written request. Follow up with a phone call. Remember, it can take a month or more to schedule a meeting.

- Schedule: The first recess is just after Valentine's Day, but think about making plans for March 21 through 31, an unusually long two-week recess. This is a non-election year, so scheduling a meeting may be easier this year than next.

- To get in touch with your lawmakers or for advice from SAF members who already are building relationships with their representatives, call Jeanne Little or Lin Schmale at 800-336-4743.

Specialty Crops Bill Passes

President Bush recently signed the "Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act," a bill ANLA actively advocated. According to ANLA, the crux of the bill is a block grant program that is administered by the state departments of agriculture. Each state is authorized to receive a minimum grant of \$100,000 to be spent on priority projects to benefit specialty producers, including nurseries and greenhouses.

Due to budget limitations and political concerns among some Congressional leaders, the bill was scaled back from its original version. It authorizes a total of \$54 million annually for five years to enhance the competitiveness of fresh produce crops, the nursery and greenhouse industry and other specialty crops. It does not automatically ensure Congress will fund the provisions, however. State ag leaders, as well as industries, will work to secure at least partial funding in the year ahead, ANLA reports.

Making A Difference

SAF members will gather in the nation's capital March 14-15 for the annual Congressional Action Days, giving industry members an opportunity to speak with their lawmakers and make a difference.

SAF has an entire schedule of events lined up for the two-day effort, including a briefing on the industry's top issues, as well as insight into the pressures the typical lawmaker faces.

Appointments can be lined up by SAF staff, or you can schedule them on your own. For more information, go online to www.safnow.org and click on Meetings & Events.