



‘Musings from the Top of the Compost Heap’

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Greetings!

A quick introduction. I am David Russell, the recently elected APGA President. My family runs Boreal Peonies, LLC a 6-year-old, 17,000 root, 40-acre peony farm about 20 miles east of Fairbanks. Both my wife and I are college professors and over 1,000 of our roots are used more for research purposes than production. I am super excited with this opportunity to move APGA forward at the State, Federal, and International levels. There are a couple recurring themes about my vision for APGA: 1) we are all in this together; we need to see ourselves as the rest of the world views us—ONE group of highly motivated growers that identify ourselves as Alaskans 2) we are only as good as our weakest farm—product from every farm that leaves Alaska is viewed as coming from each of our farms 3) APGA needs to step forward to drive the peony industry, support and help our members-not a reactionary body that leads from the rear.

Our mission is not to sell Alaskan peonies but to educate, support and promote our product. We are in a very critical time for the Alaskan peony industry—how we respond to the up-coming challenges will dictate whether or not we elevate ourselves to the world-class status that we envision. There will be a few changes members will note immediately, including my “Musings from the Top of the Compost Heap” sent to all members e-mail on a regular basis. I want them to be short and sweet, but accurately reflect the tremendous amount of work that is going on behind the scenes to support and elevate the Alaskan peony growers. Additionally, attached to these e-mails will be pertinent documents about Board activities and the activities of APGA committees and members in furtherance of our cause. Where possible an e-mail address will be included to allow immediate input from our membership—we MUST have an active membership if we are going to accomplish our goals.

All information is and will be included on the website, however, for convenience I will attach minutes, board meeting dates, the budget and any other documents that will allow everyone to be easily and directly informed. With items discussed and voted on by the Board, I hope to have quick bullet points of

all sides of the issue discussed along with the Board's decision. We have some difficult agenda items coming in the near future and it is imperative that if you have an opinion, you let us know.

A strong contingent of Alaskan peony growers visited Washington, DC and met with our Representatives on Capitol Hill this past week. I will send another note very soon outlining our successes. But we do have something that ALL Alaskan peony growers must do immediately. Following our meeting with the directors of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), we have been given an additional month to get in our Census of Agriculture forms in. Here is why it is so critical to our success.

The Census is only conducted once every FIVE (5) years. The Census is entirely confidential so no individual or operation can be identified, but this is the information that the USDA uses to direct resources, monies, and programs. Separate but related, Alaska has not been one of the 15 states included in the USDA's Annual Floriculture Report that track flowers sales, trends, etc.— information critical for us to compete with all others in our industry. For us in Alaska, we have a two-step process-1) we must be identified as an important flower producer (hence the additional month given us for turning in our Census) 2) we have been lobbying our Representatives heavily- they are in full agreement and will push for the inclusion of Alaska in up-coming Annual Floricultural Reports.

If you have been sent an Ag Census form, please complete and return or complete on-line at

www.agcounts.usda.gov/cawi

If you do not have your unique farm I.D. number, then request one at

<https://www.agcounts.usda.gov/legacy0/cgi-bin/counts>

We have lots to share, further notes will be out shortly—it has been a very busy month since our Conference in Anchorage. Please complete the Ag Census. I am really excited about our future and look forward to our success.

Cheers

Dave

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