

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



Bas Pellenaaars

Commercial Director, Latin America
Dümmen Orange
Pembroke Pines, Florida

> Bas Pellenaaars has an origin story that's proof positive you don't need a green thumb to succeed in horticulture. "I have no green background whatsoever," he says. A hearing impairment crashed his hopes of becoming a Navy pilot, so he studied economics and computer science as an alternative. After graduation, Pellenaaars chased every college grad's favorite dream: backpacking around Australia for a year — but not before applying for a job at Dutch plant breeder Fides (now Dümmen Orange). The job interview went well, and Pellenaaars had a position waiting for him post-backpacking.

"This is my first professional job after college," he says. "I'm a Dutch guy living in South Florida responsible for [our team in] Latin America. I get to work with a mix of cultures on a beautiful product that puts smiles on people's faces. I find it very unlikely I'll ever leave this industry. I've come to love it very much."

Where I find inspiration:

"My wife. She works for a bouquet maker and has recently been certified as a designer. She knows certain trends and what's happening in the market. I also look to our customers and other colleagues for inspiration. Trade organizations are another key resource in what I do — like SAF, WF&FSA and IFPA."

Trends in the cut flower market:

"One that's close to my heart is antique and vintage color flowers. This trend has been there a few years now. I remember showing these varieties 13 years ago when I started with the company, and no one wanted them. Now these palettes are triggering discussions all down the chain — including supermarket buyers and wholesale reps. That's super exciting."

What I wish the industry knew:

"There's very little known about plant breeding companies — what they do and the opportunities they offer. As

a breeder, we try to know the entire product chain and work at the head of it, preparing the industry for the future by the plants we develop. In terms of job opportunities, breeding companies have everything, including research, finance, legal and commercial sales. It's a global business, so you get to travel, too."

Best advice I've ever received:

"We have a saying in The Netherlands, which my father told me. The translation is: 'In the evening, a guy; in the morning, a guy.' You can interpret this many ways, but it comes down to when you have a late night, enjoy it, but the next day make sure you're there to do what you're supposed to do. You can also apply it very broadly throughout your life and career. If you work hard, you deserve also your time off. You need to find that balance. It's become a motto I live by." 🌿

Julie Martens Forney is a contributing writer for *Floral Management*.