



Interiorscape Hall of Fame



Tony Godfrey

2007 Allied Trade Inductee



Tony Godfrey ascribes his success at Olive Hill Greenhouses to excellent customers who appreciate quality, fantastic employees who have sought to implement his vision of the nursery, as well as a good dose of luck and good karma.

Tony grew up in Iowa and cultivated an interest in plants while tending a large garden with his mother. Moving to California at age 13 offered greater diversity of educational opportunities and experiences including working at a retail garden center in High School.

Tony enrolled at Cal Poly Pomona in 1964 to learn more about the nursery business. Tony was attracted to the warm tropical greenhouses of Bob Weidner's Buena Park

Greenhouses. They were well run, well kept, and all the plants were perfectly manicured.

While at Cal Poly, Tony met Sue, now his wife of 34 years. Even when dating, Sue knew that Tony wanted to own his own greenhouse. His dream was to own 1 acre of greenhouse by age 50. Little did he know his dream would be realized at a much younger age. After just 9 years of working for others and a chance meeting with a Fallbrook neighbor willing to rent 2 acres of greenhouses, Tony started Olive Hill Greenhouses along with partners, Jo & Carmen DiStefan,. That same year, another partnership was formed. Tony married Sue in September. A few months later, the business partnership dissolved, and the newlywed couple became sole proprietors of Olive Hill Greenhouses in December 1973.

The foliage boom of the 1970s allowed Olive Hill Greenhouses to quickly grow from 9000 square feet in 1973 to 310,000 square feet in 1980. When the foliage market began to flatten in the 1980s, Tony began searching for blooming plants to supplement sales.

Bromeliads successfully grew with foliage plants. While originally scoffed at by supermarket buyers in the early 1970s, the Bromeliad's potential was recognized by interiorscapers wanting long lasting blooms. By the mid 1990s, Bromeliads accounted for 50% of Olive Hill Greenhouses' business. Bromeliads sales enabled Olive Hill Greenhouses to continue to expand in the 1990s from 420,000 square feet to 760,000 square feet by 2000.

Always committed to new technology and sustainable practices, Tony responded to rising energy costs by investing for the future – retrofitting the entire greenhouse energy saving curtains. To keep up with an ever increasing demand for quality interior plants, in the

summer of 2007, Tony was able to begin grading for an additional 500,000 square feet of greenhouse and hopes to open 150,000 square feet mid 2008.

Olive Hill Greenhouses represents Tony Godfrey's dedication to quality, consistency, and service. He has always held strong to his motto of "quality for a fair price" and he has always appreciated loyal relationships with his customers and employees because they are key to his success.

Tony regularly visits TPIE and European growers looking for new varieties and new production ideas. Before a new variety is shipped, it is tested in Tony's home to ensure it will meet his customer's expectations.

Tony seeks to make work less laborious for his employees. This means utilizing special carts for gathering cuttings, hanging plants, pulling plants for shipments. In fact, the carts are designed by Tony and built on site. Tony strives to optimize light, temperature, water quality, fertilizer, and pesticide applications to maximize quality and consistency.

Known for his generosity in donating plants and for his support of the Floriculture industry, Tony realizes working together helps everyone and is critical for improving the industry. He participated in developing a Plant Buyers Guide and later worked with other growers to bring about Southern California Plant Tour Days.

After the NASA studies came out in the mid 1980s, Tony was instrumental in spreading the word through plant tags educating the public on the benefits of plants as air purifiers in an attempt to increase the perceived value of plants. Tony's generosity also extends to Plants At Work, the National Foliage Foundation, Quail Botanical Gardens, the San Diego County Flower & Plant Association, California Ag in the Classroom, and of course the Plantscape Industry Alliance.

Tony loves to give tours. He is proud to share his passion for plants and their impact on people. Optimistic at the end of every tour that he's made another small step in expanding the market for top quality plants – one person at a time. Tony believes generosity and success go hand in hand, all the while acknowledging that his accomplishments wouldn't have been possible without the constant support of his wife Sue, their loving family, and a loyal and diligent workforce. And, of course, no business would succeed without supportive suppliers and wonderful customers. It is these relationships that give Tony the most satisfaction in life. The joys and rewards of a family run business are counting employees, customers, and suppliers as integral parts of the family.

Tony Godfrey is honored here today for his generosity in building the industry as well as his diligence in providing consistent quality plants to the interiorscape market.

