

5 MINUTES WITH — DUSTYN MILLER



By Teresa McPherson

Dustyn Miller is ornamental grower/retail greenhouse and nursery manager at Miller Plant Farm in York, Pennsylvania. He is a GPN Magazine 40 Under 40 alumnus (Class of 2017).

Could you share a little about your background?

I am a fifth generation “farmer,” so one could say growing plants is in my blood. I earned a bachelor’s degree in agribusiness management from Penn State and returned to the family business to help posture Miller Plant Farm to remain relevant and sustainable in the community for years to come.

In 2011, we opened up a new garden center and farm market on site where we can now hold events, workshops and festivals, and provide a very customer friendly experience. I prefer to not abandon my passion for growing by keeping a very hands-on structure with my work, and am responsible for growing many of the ornamental crops, as well as aiding in the management of the retail garden center.

As a family business, what measures do you take to separate the family part from the business part?

This is such a sobering question — makes me realize I should have more measures in place! Not only do I work with my father, sister and cousin, but my wife is involved in the business, too! And we all live on the farm as well!

During the spring season, the work switch does not get turned off very much, admittedly. One thing that is a blessing is that our business does close on Sundays. I still have to put some time in at work and, depending on the seasons, sometimes more than just an hour or two. But Sundays are greatly cherished and protected as family days.

Note: After my wife proofread my responses, we now have a new rule of no discussion of business at the dinner table.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I really enjoy how happy plants and gardening make people. Whether it’s a seasoned gardener or a rookie, when I get to share information with folks sometimes the excitement level is off the charts. It is very refreshing, too, because in this industry you have to work extremely hard during the prime seasons. Without some affirmation, one would surely burn out.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I really enjoy working in the yard and garden. I live in an old house on about 13 acres, and in five years I’ve planted over 50 trees and only cut three down. I also enjoy riding my mountain bike, playing in the yard with the kids, and sharing my love of nature and outdoors while hiking with my wife, two daughters and dog.

Favorite plant to grow? Why?

It is so hard to pick just one. I have a very unique love/hate relationship with poinsettias. The crop offers up many challenges that you don’t get with many spring crops, and I always enjoy a challenge. I’ve grown them for 15 years and feel like I’ve seen it all and made all the mistakes, but every year you will learn at least one new lesson when you grow poinsettias. 🌺