



Interiorscape Hall of Fame



Gerry Leider

2000 Plantscape Professional

In 1890 Gerry's grandfather Michael Leider Sr. immigrated to Evanston, Illinois from Luxemburg, Germany. Beginning with a small pushcart he helped establish the family's horticultural business roots. Gerry's father, Mike continued to grow the business, developing a production greenhouse for potted flowers supplying the growing Chicago market. As business grew it became necessary to move to larger quarters. In 1965 a state-of-the art facility was planned and built in Prairie View, a suburb of Chicago.

Gerry was born in 1943 to Mike & Mary Leider. He graduated from Loyola University in 1966 with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting. While at Loyola, Gerry and brother Jim grew Tropical Plant Rentals and from it's beginnings in 1963, their focus was on the Chicago market. After graduating from college, the Army called Gerry. He went through the US Army officer candidate school and was assigned to the 101st Airborne in Vietnam from 1968-1969. He returned home and in June of 1970 married Judy. Gerard was born in 1976 and Michele followed in 1978.

There is a story behind the beginning of Tropical Plant Rentals, it goes like this...while Gerry was attending Loyola University in downtown Chicago an opportunity presented itself for Gerry and his brother Jim. As would happen, Gerry's dad, Mike, rented some greenhouse space to a man so he could start this business called Tropical Plant Rentals. It was a very unique new service concept. This man would water, dust, trim and fertilize foliage plants right in a clients' own office! If any died, he would replace them at no cost to the client! Well, within a year the young man left town owing Mike money and leaving a lot of unhappy customers. Mike was not happy and told his sons to see if anything could be done to recoup the loss. Since Gerry went to school in downtown Chicago, where the few customers were located, he naturally serviced the plants, watering, feeding, and trimming doing whatever was needed to keep the customers happy. This is the true birth of Tropical Plant Rentals.

In 1975 Tropical Plant Rentals began their expansion into 12 other markets, becoming the leaders in the emerging interiorscape industry. In 1973 another venture came into being with brother Jim as a partner. J-G Greenhouses was created for the purpose of growing high quality, specialty items that could not be obtained from other sources. This operation would supply Leider Greenhouses and Tropical Plant Rentals.

1975 brought two more ventures were launched, Flower Island and Michael's Nursery & Farms. Flower Island capitalized on the growth of shopping malls and provided a wide variety of cut flowers, blooming plants, foliage and accessories, all reasonably priced, fresh and convenient. Michael's Nursery and Farms was already supplying

Interiorscape firms with quality foliage. This acquisition helped to insure the consistent supply of quality foliage and expand its offerings to the trade. Michael's continues this tradition still today with Gerry as the Vice President.

In 1989, Tropical Plant Rentals (TPR) was sold to Rentokil, Inc. The parent company, Rentokil Initial, is the largest service provider in the world. At the time of the purchase Tropical Plant Rentals had annual billings in excess of 40 million dollars. Gerry continues to be an active part of the industry in his position as Vice Chairman of Rentokil, Inc-Tropical Plant Services.

Continuing in the family business, Gerry is also Vice President of Leider Horticultural Companies, Inc., a fourth generation supplier of potted and flowering foliage plants to the retail market located in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. The number of Associations and Councils he has been on, and still actively supports, are evidence of Gerry's giving nature. His memberships include, The American Horticultural Marketing Council, American Society of Interior Designers, American Society of Landscape Architects, Associated Landscape Contractors of America, Chicago Botanical Gardens, Fihire, Florida Foliage Association, Florida Nursery Growers Association, Interior Plantscape Association (Now, ALCA-IPD) and the Landscape Architecture Foundation.

Gerry has been actively involved in the raising the visibility of the interiorscape industry by lecturing at Ohio State University, University of Illinois, New York Botanical Gardens Chicago Botanical Gardens, Harvard University, Florida Short Course, Purdue University, Harrington Institute of Design, Chicago, Humber College, Rexdale, Ontario, Association for Zoological Horticulture, North Carolina, FTD Association Montreal, Shemex International, and Penn State University.

Gerry's commitment to this industry in the beginning was evident with his support of industry conferences. Gerry developed the procedures and methods that were later adopted by many other companies. He permitted and encouraged his staff to speak at industry conferences giving freely of the methods his company developed. Gerry's belief that if there is to be competition, it should be good competition, is the basis for many of the sessions at the conferences around the country today.

Gerry is responsible for bringing to the market the first line of injection molded plastic decorative containers, sized and shaped specifically for the commercial plantscaping market. These containers were then made available to the industry through his products division of TPR, Primescape Products.

Gerry's vision has had a profound impact on this industry. His fingerprint is seen today on many of the Plantscape companies as they continue to use the procedures, methods and products that he gave to us as a fledgling industry.

