

CARES Recipient Profile



THIS FARM
CARES

Farm: Riverview Flower Farm

Location: Riverview, Hillsborough County

Date of Origination: 1982

Commodities: Nursery



In a state named for its beautiful flowers, it's no wonder that millions of Floridians head to local nurseries to find just the right plants to make their yard a showcase of color. But for many weekend gardeners, the idea of buying plants can be daunting. To help these novice landscapers, brothers Rick and Dave Brown, founders of the Riverview Flower Farm, set a goal to make gardening in Florida easier.

To identify plants that grow well in Florida, the nursery conducted more than 10,000 trials, seeing how each did under local climatic conditions, as well as with disease and pest resistance. From these trials Riverview selected 30 perennials and 10 ornamental grasses which are stocked in over a hundred Home Depot stores from Gainesville to Key West.

Stretching out over 127 acres at three locations, Riverview Flower Farm has come a long way from its humble beginnings. The farm was started on a three-acre plot in Riverview in 1982 by Rick, Dave, and Dave's wife, Diane.

Early on, Riverview saw the need to move away from the inefficient, overhead irrigation system that most growers were using. They turned to drip-tube fertigation as a more efficient and cost-effective way to irrigate and fertilize plants simultaneously. Water is drawn from the retention pond and filtered three times to improve water quality and prevent particles from clogging the drip lines. An eight-to-10-minute run on the drip system would deliver about six ounces of water to each container as well as a specific amount of fertilizer. As the plants are pulled from a production zone, that segment of the zone can be turned off, conserving more water. As a result, the drip lines use 95% less water than the old overhead irrigation system.

While Florida Friendly Plants™ are hardy, the tough conditions at retail outlets make it difficult for any plants to survive. With this in mind, Rick and Dave developed their own special growing medium that would retain moisture longer. To increase efficiency, Riverview devised an automated process which distributes the potting medium from storage bins to the production floor on an as-needed basis.

When head grower Jeff Lewis was asked what made Riverview Flower Farm a farm that CARES, he said, "I'd say these owners, Dave and Rick Brown, they're probably the most progressive owners I've worked for as far as understanding that the only constant in this industry is change."

Source: FreshFromFlorida.com – 2006