

World's Tallest Sunflower Was Grown In Indiana

Tall plant breeder/grower Brian Moore (Vol. 48, No. 6) couldn't be happier that someone else grew the world's tallest trellis-supported sunflower. That's because it was seed he bred that did the trick for Indiana grower Alex Babich.

"Other top sunflower growers are breaking personal records with the seed, but Alex's plant reached 35 ft., 9 in.," says Moore proudly. "He was recognized by the Guinness Book of Records this past September. He beat the previous world record of 30 ft., 1 in. that had lasted for 10 years."

Moore was on hand for the recognition. It was seed that Moore bred by crossing a wild sunflower found in Nebraska with seed he'd received from Richard Hope, a grower in the U.K., nearly 20 years earlier. The seed had been harvested from a previous world-record sunflower.

"I didn't know if the old seeds would germinate, so I laid them all out in a furrow and covered them over," says Moore. "Only one grew."

He planted the Nebraska wild sunflower seed nearby. To cross the two, Moore would climb a ladder when he came home from work each day and rub the heads together.

"I was hoping that Hope's seeds, which were fairly inbred, when crossed with the wild seed, which is so different, would exhibit hybrid vigor," explains Moore.

That was two years ago. Moore shared the resulting seeds with another grower in Germany, who grew a 28-ft., 2-in. tall plant from the cross in 2024. That plant matched the previous all-time second-highest sunflower. It was that grower who swapped seed with Babich.

"That kind of cross-pollinated plants are called transgressive hybrids, when you take two dissimilar things, and in the second generation, they recombine," says Moore. "They're called hopeful monsters."

Moore is hopeful the monsters will come through again for Babich, who hopes to break his own record.

"He's asked me to not share the seed with anyone else this coming year."

While Moore developed the seed, he has no interest in competing for the title of tallest. "Growers like Alex and previous record holders use a trellis for their plants and baby



Sunflower reached 35 ft., 9 in. and was recognized by the Guinness Book of Records.

each one along," explains Moore. "I don't believe in trellising. I like to see how tall they can grow when planted en masse with other tall plants."

Moore's second-generation hybrid reached 18 ft., 7 in., without supports. Although he wasn't mentioned in the Guinness recognition, he received an award from his home state's Department of Agriculture.

While Moore isn't planning to build a trellis anytime soon, he's working on his next record-breaking seeds.

"I got some wild sunflower seeds from a man in Texas and plan to cross them with mine to see if they'll do even better," says Moore.

He was also given some seed from a Minnesota grower who had grown some really tall Mexican sunflowers.

"They didn't do well in 2024, but reseeded themselves," says Moore. "This past year, the tallest was 17 ft., 9 in., and another one reached 16 ft., 7 in., unstaked."

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Stone Barn Book Highlights Historic Structures

Dr. Robert Kroeger of Cincinnati, Ohio, has published an illustrated guide to stone barns located east of the Mississippi.

"Stone barns represent less than 1% of all old barns in the country and, as such, are extremely rare," says Kroeger. "Many of them are artistic masterpieces, reflecting the work of a master stonemason."

Kroeger's writing career began in the mid-1980s, when an editor encouraged him to write a book on dentistry. Since then, he's covered numerous topics, including several books on disappearing Americana.

"My goal is to preserve history via the old barn and its architecture and stories, which often disappear when the barn is dismantled," Kroeger says. "Stories, more so than the actual barn, are my inspiration."

According to Kroeger, over 95% of historic barns are made of wood, making stone barns both rare and unique. This raises questions about building preferences, especially given that trees were abundant and sawmills were prevalent in the 19th century, when stone barns were constructed. Pennsylvania's 1798 direct tax record listed 1,829 stone barns, accounting for 20% of barns in the region. Thousands still exist there today.

In "Stone Barns of America: Historic Icons East of the Mississippi," Kroeger delves into their colorful stories—from a barn built in the early 1900s to promote Sears agricultural products to an advertising barn in Maine and a stone barn complex built by the Vanderbilts in Vermont.

Each story and painting has a title: "Seventeen Children," "Patriotism Personified," "Cryptic Coggins," "The Rubber King of Bristol," and "Hands to Work...Hearts to God" are a few examples. He found a stone barn complex in Charlevoix, Mich., the most fascinating.

"The barn was built during the WWI era and blessed with a marvelous yet poignant story. It had deteriorated but was recently restored by a generous history lover, to the tune of \$18 million."

Unlike his other projects, Kroeger didn't have a database to consult for "Stone Barns of America." Instead, he had to explore each state through Google searches, state historical

opened two storefronts in Richmond, one in 2004 and a second in 2020.

According to Chadwick Jr., the farm's most popular orchid is Phalaenopsis.

"They're the number-one houseplant in America and can even be found in grocery stores," he says.

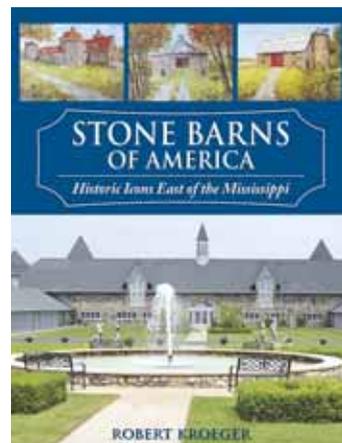
Still, his favorite remains Cattleyas, like his father.

"Cattleyas date back to Victorian England, and they became the corsage orchid in the U.S. from the 1920s to the 1960s."

Once established, Phalaenopsis, or "Phals," are relatively low-maintenance and require only weekly watering and indirect light. Many can live for decades, some even over a century. Most orchids grow to between a foot and 18 in. tall. They'll bloom for two to three months, then go dormant for the rest of the year. This extended dormancy fuels their "orchid boarding," which makes up a significant part of the business.

"It's the bread and butter of our farm," Chadwick Jr. says. "Most of our 13 greenhouses are devoted to boarding."

He notes that it's an ideal solution for people who love orchids but don't have the space or time to care for plants when they aren't blooming. Some customers board just a few plants, while others keep hundreds in rotation. Pricing starts at \$2.25 per plant per month, with rates varying.



Of the 46 barns featured in the book, 30 are listed on the National Register, and three are National Landmarks.

societies, and state preservation offices. The stories range from 18th-century colonial America through the Gilded Age of the late 1800s. Of the 46 barns he features in this volume, 30 are on the National Register, and three are National Landmarks.

Other published titles include "Historic Barns of Ohio," a book featuring a barn from each of Ohio's 88 counties, along with a painting and an essay; two books on dentistry; and seven books on golf in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. Kroeger's book on stone barns west of the Mississippi is expected in 2027. He believes there are more stories to tell.

"Take a drive on the rural roads of America, especially in the Midwest, and you'll see many old barns on the verge of collapse. As they vanish, so do their stories. So many barns ... so little time."

"Stone Barns of America: Historic Icons East of the Mississippi" is \$39.95 and available from publisher Acclaim Press, online booksellers such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble, and independent booksellers.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dr. Robert Kroeger (www.barnart.weebly.com; Facebook: The Historic Barn Project).

The business also breeds orchids, including a project focused on developing hybrid orchid seeds in honor of the First Ladies of the United States. The process can take years to yield results.

"Breeding orchids takes five to seven years from seed to maturity, so that's a sideline for us," Chadwick Jr. says.

The seeds grow in sterilized laboratory beakers for two years, then are placed in community pots (10 plantlets per pot) until the most robust plants are transferred into individual pots a year later.

"We have two orchid books that have been very popular," Chadwick Jr. shares. "Art Sr. wrote 'The Classic Cattleyas,' which is now in its second edition. I wrote 'First Ladies and Their Orchids: A Century of Name-sake Cattleyas,' which ties in nicely to the 250th Anniversary of the United States and will be featured in our orchid exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show in February."

Looking ahead, the farm will expand its agrotourism offerings, which currently include a perennial garden and a barn/event space.

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Virginia Farm Grows, Sells and Boards Orchids

Chadwick & Son Orchids of Powhatan, Va., grows, sells and boards upwards of 10,000 orchids at a time.

"Orchids were the 80-year hobby and passion of our founder, Art Chadwick Sr.," says Art Chadwick, Jr. "I'm his son, and I spent my early career working as an electrical engineer in corporate America. In 1989, I joined my father in turning his orchid hobby into a business."

Chadwick Sr. began growing orchids as a

hobby in 1945. He carried a special affinity for Cattleya orchids and first obtained plants from estate growers outside Philadelphia. Eventually, he and his father built a greenhouse to care for them.

Chadwick Sr. passed away in 2021 at 90, but his legacy lives on. Today, the showcase farm has grown into a business spanning 18 acres in Central Virginia, with 13 greenhouses totaling 15,000 sq. ft. The farm initially sold wholesale, then switched to retail and