

# Robert Barnitz



Robert Barnitz grew up in Meigs County, Ohio, and has been involved in family-oriented agriculture since his childhood. His father was a produce dealer. After marrying Corena in 1959, the couple moved to West Virginia.

In 1970, they went into business in Mason with two backyard greenhouses and a roadside produce stand. By the 1980s, Bob's had acquired a fleet of trucks and began shipping to companies along the East Coast. In the 1990s, Bob's formed an exclusive partnership with Ball Seed Company to produce plug seedlings. In 1998, Bob's produced 7 million plugs for Ball Seed. In 2013, the company produced 120 million plugs. The company expanded in the 1990s, opening new retail locations throughout the region. In 2005, Bob's opened market in Atlanta. The company also became a rooting

station for Dümmer USA.

From his humble truck farm beginnings, Bob's has grown to encompass 20 acres of greenhouses and five retail locations with \$18 million in annual gross sales and 130 full-time employees. Bob's is among the top-10 plug and liner producers in the country, despite just 15 years of focusing on those products. Bob's has participated extensively in trialing of new plant and seed varieties. The family's plant varieties (grown by Bob's, but patented by Ball Seed) have been featured at Disney World, the Pentagon and the White House.

The company was honored with the 2003 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, the 2007 Mason County Community Service Award, the 2011 Greenhouse Grower's Operation of the Year, and the 2013 Mason County Fair was dedicated to Mr. Barnitz for his years of support.

Barnitz has worked with West Virginia University to study noise reduction in greenhouses, and to develop an internship, which provides two undergraduates with housing and a salary for six months while getting hands-on experience working at Bob's. With the help of his wife and five sons, Bob's Market and Greenhouses become one of the leaders in the United States nursery industry.