

GROWERTALKS

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Acres Online

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Q-37 comments--who's saying what?

There are just 10 or so days left in the official comment period for the proposed overhaul of Q-37. I checked out the comments online (Web link is below) that have come in thus far, and it's an interesting read. In the five pages of comments, there was a heavy dose of wisdom from academics and scientists and plenty of oddball rantings from irate citizens (anonymous, of course), but I didn't find very many comments that represented floriculture's interests. I did note that Kim Bodger, CEO of Bodger Seeds weighed in, as did Brian Gold of Oro Farms and Pineae Greenhouses (good work, guys!), but I saw few other names or companies that I recognized.

Interestingly, the hobbyists seem to be well represented. Paul F. Kroll asks that saintpaulia and gesneriads be excluded from the inspection requirements, because he brings them across the border from and to New York for plant shows. And J. Quinn, a medical doctor and bonsai enthusiast, weighed in articulately on behalf of bonsai collectors. So did Joyce Fingerut, government liaison and president of the American Rock Garden Society.

The American Rock Garden Society has a government liaison? Amazing.

If the hobbyists can weigh in, so can (and should) we. It's not too late for those of us who depend on floriculture for our livelihoods to be heard. Go to <http://docket.epa.gov/edkfed/do/EDKStaffCollectionDetailView?objectId=0b0007d4804fb613> to read the comments and to submit your own.

We don't need APHIS to make its decisions based on comments such as this one:

"ban all foreign plants. we dont (sic) want toxic chemicals on any imported plant - that is bad and unnecessary. it is time we all encouraged the planting of native plants - which are all endangered from the importing of so many foreign plants."

Remember--your pot company knows!

Last time, when I wrote about using your pot supplier as a good source of information on the container labeling regulations, I didn't mean to exclude ITML. They dropped me a polite line to let me know that they, too, have been on top of the regulation since last fall. Their Web site (www.itml.com) now lists the measurements and volumes of all their pots, as will their new catalog, to be released at OFA. Also, ITML's Jeremy Vermeer tells me they've designed

true one-quart squares and rounds. I've heard of other pot manufacturers doing the same. In other words, if you need help with the container regulations, ask your container supplier--they know their stuff.

What's trendy?

Here are a few trends and ideas I've been picking up in my travels. Put them to work this spring:

Red is in. Both the February *Southern Living* and the February/March *Garden Design* featured red accessories on the cover. I've also noted red on the covers of several home décor catalogs. (Here's a trend-tracking hint: If somebody puts a product or a color on the cover of their magazine or catalog, it's done because they know it's hot. They don't use images or colors that might repel a reader.)

So is citrus. Another big color trend this season? Citrus--greens, oranges and yellows. They're everywhere!



Holiday ideas. It's a bit late for Chinese New Year (it was February 9), but it's not too late to show you the cool pot mum that editor Lena Fenton picked up at her local grocery store. You don't have to celebrate New Years in February to appreciate the clever packaging.

By the way, the packaging has a side benefit: In an hour you want to buy another one.



Organics continue to be in ... and they're getting more in. Whether you're a grower or a retailer, it pays to have a solid grasp of the many definitions of "organic" gardening. Your customers expect you to be the expert. Twice in

one day I received fliers on organic seminars--one for an organic cooking and gardening seminar at the Chicago Botanic Garden April 8, and one from the Organic Trade Association, promoting its 5 th Annual "All Things Organic" tradeshow and conference April 30-May 3, also in Chicago.

Consider attending (or sending an employee to attend) a good organic seminar to learn the lingo. The organics market is only going to grow, and it's a virtually untapped niche in floriculture.

Bachman's adds a new retail outlet

One of America's premier garden centers and florists, Bachman's up in Minneapolis, is opening yet another location, this time at the site of their 629-acre production facility near Lakeville, Minnesota (Bachman's already has 20 retail outlets, including six with garden centers). But what's cool about this newest location, to be called Cedar Acres, is that it will focus heavily on nursery, landscape and hardscape materials. It's aimed both at do-it-yourselfers and at consumers who are working with landscape designers and want to personally select their trees and shrubs. The 14-acre site will include plenty of display gardens ... and even a putting green where Dale Bachman says customers can take a break and work on their short game.

Fly to GLEE on the cheap

\$100 for a roundtrip flight to England? You can get this deal if you're thinking about attending GLEE, England's big garden center show, and if you're one of the first 100 people from North America to sign up. Glee is running this special promotion to attract more overseas visitors. Flights depart from Newark on September 16 or 17 and return September 20 or 21. Go to www.bleebirmingham.com and click on the travel section. Or e-mail Amy Dufour at amy@marshmeadowsmarketing.com.

Finally ...

I'm always on the lookout for ways that growers and retailers are finding an edge over the competition. During a recent trip to Florida, I dropped in at Kilgore Seed Company in Sanford, where they've recently introduced an "emergency" drive-up entrance for customers who are frantic to get their vegetable seeds in the shortest possible time. Jim Kilgore explained that everything is set up for speed, from the bank-style delivery tubes to I-Pass-style RFID chips for payment. Customers can be in and out with their order of bean seeds in less than 45 seconds. The service isn't just used by commercial customers with last-minute jobs, Jim adds. Many hobbyists have taken advantage of the ultra-fast emergency service, too. Jim's next plan? Home or jobsite delivery via helicopter.



See you next time, with news and views from Pack Trials.

Chris

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