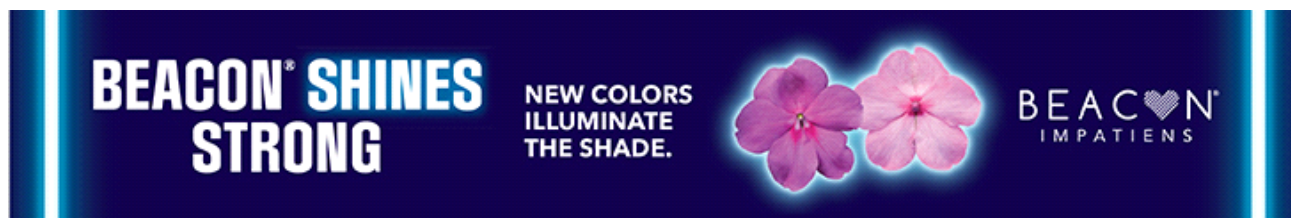


April 7-8: How Bad Was It?, SNA Scholarships, UV-C Questions and Acres of Buzz



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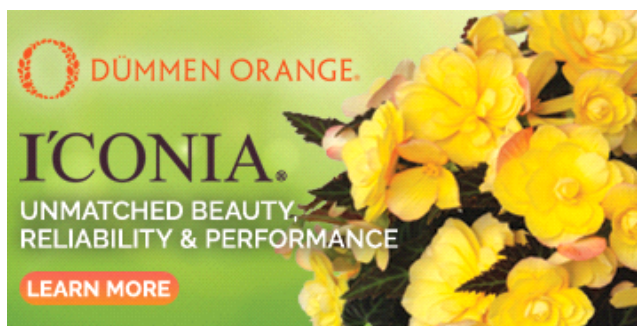


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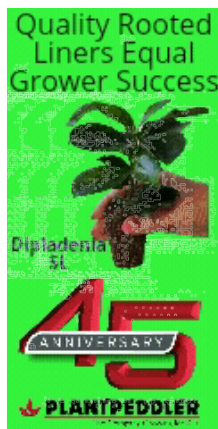
News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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How Bad Was It?
A few more comments ...
Beating the Weather
No Guarantee ...
Plant Disease Webinar
SNA Scholarships
Cold, Go Away!
UV-C Light Questions
Finally ...



How was April 7-8? You Don't Want to Know!

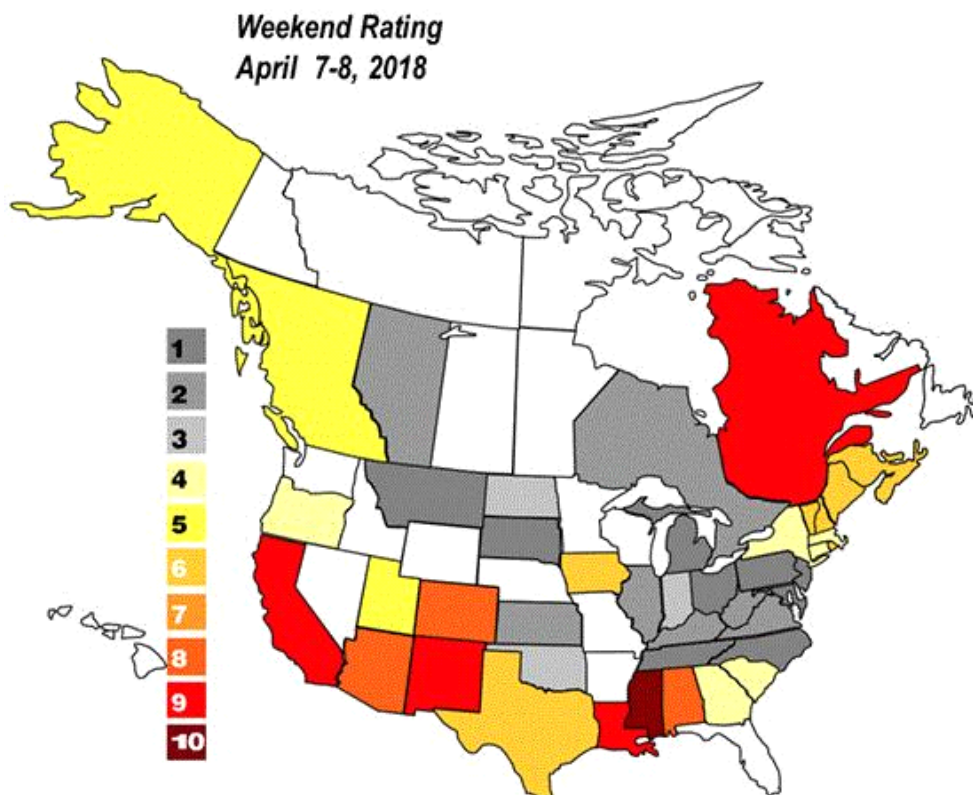


A record 21 zeros!

The worst April weekend in the eight-year history of this survey, that's how it was. But unless you are from the deep south, Colorado or California, you already knew that. You were probably one of the ones who sent in a record 21 ZEROS! That's in addition to 17 1s and a bunch of 2s.

The national averages? 4.4 in the U.S. and 4.8 in Canada. That's based on 91 scores from 39 states and five provinces. I've seen some March weekends score lower (and also higher), but never before in the eight-year history of this survey have I seen such a dismal April weekend.

Here's the map:



Have you ever seen anything so gray? Looks like an Ansel Adams photograph.

Sun Parasol
FiredUp Coral



How bad was it?

It was so bad, Fairbanks, Alaska, with a score of 5 (from John Dart), beat both the U.S. and Canadian averages. Wrote John (who, like all Alaskans, is an optimist), "People just getting started. Two feet of snow here! It's beginning to melt. Life is good."

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HAPPY TO PRESENT:



It was so bad, this week I made an exception in my survey: Normally, if someone sends in a 0 rating, I convert it to a 1, since that's the lowest rating on my 1-10 scale. But this week, I got so many 0s, I took it that when somebody said 0, they meant 0! As in zip, zero, nada. As in 1 would be a big improvement!

Abe Van Wingerden of Metrolina Greenhouses, for instance, gave Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Kentucky all 1s, and gave Missouri, Illinois and Kansas each a goose egg. He's never sent a 0 before. I don't even think he's sent a 1 before.

Abe wrote this of last weekend, and the season so far:

"Very cold weather and snow in some markets made for a VERY soft weekend in most all of our markets. We think the cold front gripping the East Coast is now moving out for good, but still have some pockets of cold the next few days. We are now facing a very compressed season in all of our markets, so this will put a strain on trucking, labor and every facet of the business.

"Our team is ready for it, and it will take 100% execution on a daily basis to make it happen. I truly believe that if Mother Nature would cooperate, the demand is still there, and our industry's ability to meet that demand is the key."

Abe's cousin Alex Van Der Hengst of South Central Growers in Tennessee gave 0s to Tennessee, Kentucky, Oklahoma and Missouri. Here's what he had to say:

"This is my 24th spring working full-time in the industry. I've never given a 0 before, so you can infer that this was the sh#%*&\$! weekend we have ever experienced in April. With the weather forecast not looking great for next weekend, it is going to be a long slog to get Spring 2018 to positive."

Some folks weren't satisfied with 0. Joe Ward from Oklahoma, sticking to the rules of the survey, said if he could go lower he would. Scofflaw Chris Baker from Ohio did go lower, much lower, giving his weekend a -5.

Regionally, only the West scored anywhere near where we should be in April (7.8). No other region scored higher than 5.3 (Mountain region). The Midwest was 2.3, the Plains 2.9, the East 3.1. New England was amazingly good, at 5.2, but I think that's in part due to some glass-half-full scores.

Texas, being a big state, ranged from 2 to 9 (for an average of 5.5), depending on if the score came from the Dallas area (tarnation!) or southern Texas (yeehaw!).

A few more comments about the weekend

Long Island, New York: "One of the worst starts in years. Average daytime high temperatures (for four consecutive weeks now) of 45F are about 15 degrees below normal. Chilling breezes and snow in the forecast killed any remaining enthusiasm for gardening."—Sig Feile, Atlantic Nursery

(he scored it a 3)

Montana: “Snow... rain ... snow ... and more snow—the National Weather Service predicts snow through April, with record snow packs for our mountains. A side note: Greenhouses repacked, [we are] behind on spacing due to no sales/no space. Trying to culturally keep crops nice despite cloudy, dark weather and crowded conditions. A challenge indeed, but I still look forward to being a grower each day.”—Jeri Zirbel, Caras Nursery (score of 3)

Ball Seed sales rep Duayne Friesen of Manitoba waxed poetic about the polar vortex they are enduring:

“Like a dark force, the Vortex is upon us, laying bare the land. In its wake lies the ground frozen, dormant, lifeless. The sun, though bright in the sky, is weak and powerless over our land. We can only raise our mittened fists to the sky and cry for mercy and hope that Lord Vortex will hear our cries and release his grip.

“Manitoba was a 0.”



Want to beat the weather? Host an event

As I said, the weekend wasn't all bad. I got two 10s (from California and Colorado) and 9s from Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico and southern Texas. But even in northern states, a few folks did better than the average because they were hosting events.

In Michigan (3.3 average), Paul Begick scored the weekend a 6, writing, “Sales up 7% compared to last year, but mainly due to Outdoor Living promotion with Weber Grill demonstration. Plant material and plant care products down from last year (due to weather). If it would not have been for grills and other outdoor living products, we would have been way down.”

In Iowa (only one score, hers), Kate Terrell gave it a 6. “Good attendance (over 120) at a seminar on creating an outdoor room. Huge sales in patio furniture and pottery. I think that bodes well for what is to come.”

Up in Quebec, Sylvie Picard scored it a 9 because “we started our new guided visit of the production greenhouses.”



Not a guarantee ...

However, events aren't a guarantee of sales, as Vicki Evans of Oklahoma found out:

“A total bust in northeast Oklahoma. Cold, no sun, lows in the 20s are still predicted for this coming weekend. We are having our annual customer appreciation day with hot dogs, hamburgers, drinks and chips. We offer 20% off all purchases except labor. We are usually running ourselves ragged, but I don't know with this weather.”

As for how the weekend of April 14 and 15 will turn out, The Weather Channel says much of the northern half of the country is in for another winter blast, with snow, rain and wind. Old Man Winter seems to be extra crotchety this year.

But spring *has* to arrive, and when it does, I suggest you hang on and prepare to run yourself ragged.



Janna's webinar is archived

If you missed our latest webinar, "Don't Balk at Plant Diseases—Strike Them Out," you missed a good one! Purdue Professor Janna Beckerman gave us a lively look at preventing and controlling pythium, botrytis, leaf spots and anthracnose; and just to make it relevant to the season, she gave it a baseball-themed slant. You can catch the archived webinar at www.growertalks.com/webinars.

Thanks to our sponsor, BASF, for helping make these free webinars possible!



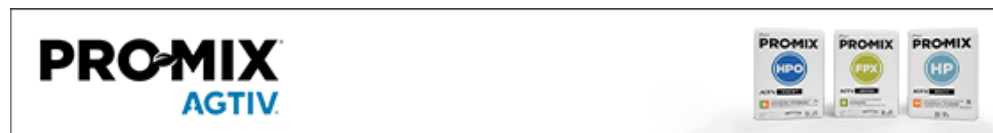
Money for school in the Southeast

Attention hort majors in the Southeastern U.S.: there's \$18,000 in scholarship money up for grabs, courtesy of the Southern Nursery Association (SNA).

The moneys, from the Sidney B. Meadows Scholarship, will go to as many as twelve recipients (\$1,500 each) that are residents of one of the 16 southeastern states within the SNA region (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia). However, they may attend a school outside of the region. You can be studying any facet of ornamental horticulture.

The scholarship is dedicated to the late Sidney B. Meadows, a past president of SNA who has been described as one of the industry's great humanitarians. Sidney was an avid supporter of student scholarships and believed that providing aid for students was the most important way to ensure the growth and development of all facets of the industry.

For more information, requirements and application instructions, go to www.sbmsef.org or email info@sbmsef.org. The deadline is May 27.

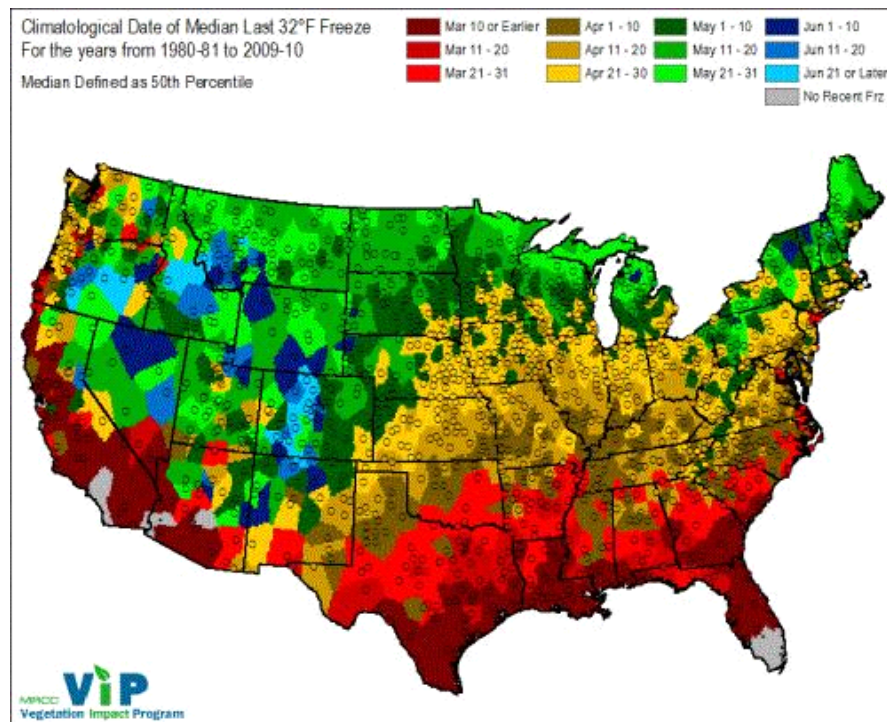


Flippin' cold—go away!

I stole, er, borrowed the following weather item from one of my newest newsletter editors, Dr. Matthew Chappell, a professor at the University of Georgia. He's a genius about woody ornamentals, and a really funny guy to boot. What? You don't read his twice-monthly "*Nursery & Landscape Insider*" newsletter? Check out the current edition [HERE](#). Now, here's Matthew!

I must admit, one of my favorite spring activities is to torment anyone north of Athens, Georgia, regarding how beautiful spring in the south is (especially compared to spring at the Ball Publishing mothership in West Chicago, Illinois).

This usually begins the first week of March and concludes in late May, when the southeast becomes just plain hot (which is why we invented pools). However, this spring has been pretty chilly across North America, but especially east of the Rocky Mountains. And while not consistently cold outside of the northern tier states, the persistent cool air does seem to be affecting sales and not in a good way.



Regardless of how cool it's been, it's always good to look back to average last frost/freeze dates to really gain an understanding of when spring kicks into high gear. Image courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

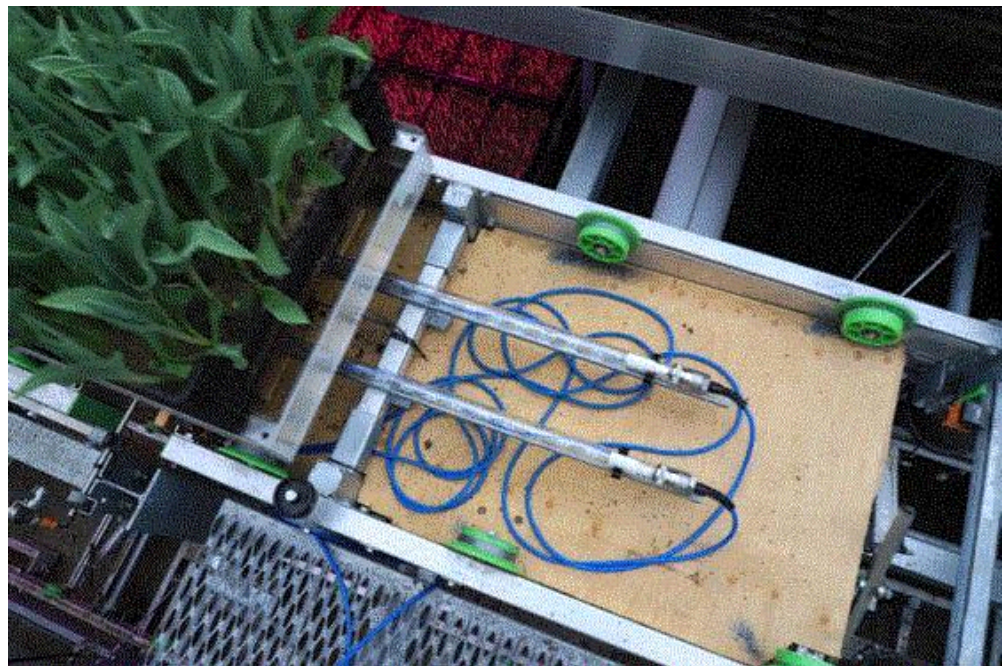
I like to first tackle the why factor when it comes to weather. Why has it been so cool? Well, this year, like the past three winters, has ended with a large high pressure in the North Atlantic. This high funnels cool air down from Canada into the plains and northeastern U.S., which occasionally filters down to the Gulf Coast. The later into spring we get, with warm air surging north, we run into a scenario where decent storm systems form along the warm/cold boundary and provide snow to the north and rain to the south. From a drought standpoint, this is great. From a sales perspective, it stinks.

The good news is that medium range forecast models show the high breaking down, and when it does, then we'll likely return to more normal spring weather.



Questions about UV-C light

A while back, I wrote about tulip grower Aron Mooij and how he is experimenting with UV-C light to disinfect the roots of his tulip plants (which are growing in bulb crates). UV-C is ultraviolet light with wavelengths between 100 and 280 nanometers. It's effective for disinfecting water and sterilizing surfaces, but it can also cause severe skin burns. UV-C from the sun is filtered out by the earth's atmosphere. (UV-A ranges from 320 to 400 nm; 95% of sunlight is UV-A, which causes wrinkles, skin spots and other types of premature aging. UV-B is 290 to 320 nm, and is responsible for sunburn; both types of UV play a role in skin cancer.)



One of my readers wanted to know more—he noted that UV-C is dangerous for people and he wondered how Aron handled worker safety. He was also curious about the substrate Aron is using and how that impacts the efficacy of the UV-C. So I reached out to Aron via email to learn a bit more. Here's what Aron replied:

"UV-C is dangerous for people, that is right. When the light is on, there are no people working in that area. The UV-C is only in the last glasshouses, where nobody is working."

As for the soil question, I suspected, based on what I saw, that Aron is actually disinfecting the exposed roots that grow out through the bottom of the crates. He confirmed that that's correct:



"On the roots under the crates, there is always a lot of penicillium and botrytis growing. When I use the UV-C, there is less of this under the crates." It does not work 100%, he says, "but 80% is better than nothing."



Finally ...

I'm putting the finishing touches on this *Acres Online* from seat 8A as I head to Los Angeles and the start of pack trials ... er, sorry, Spring Trials (don't be thinking I'm fancy: 8A is cattle class). Jen Zurko is somewhere behind me, while Ellen Wells is waiting for us at LAX, enduring our three-hour delay for a warning light (she suggested the pilot do what the rest of us do: put a piece of electrical tape over it).

Anyway, we start at PanAmerican Seed on Friday and work our way north, wrapping up Wednesday evening. As we have for, I think, 10 years now, Ellen and I will be the Bobbleheads, producing our daily *Acres of buZZ!* email summary of the highlights, plus doing videos from each of the stops, ably shot and edited by videographer extraordinaire Jen (whom we can count on to chime in from behind the camera when we can't remember a variety's name).

As for what we anticipate? I haven't gotten many hints. I do know that PanAmerican will have their new IDM-resistant impatiens behind a black curtain, and we hope to get an on-the-record peek at it. And Dümme Orange has just announced a rooted cutting system called Basewell that's designed to be used with the new AutoStix transplanter. We'll see that on Sunday.

So watch for "*Acres Of buZZ!*" in your inbox Saturday through Thursday. Or go to www.springtrials.com for links to our daily updates and videos.



See you next time!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chi".

Chris Beytes

Editor

GrowerTalks and *Green Profit*

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