

# Hort Couture & Ball Seed, plus AmEx, Cultivate and Sq. Ft. Gardening Day

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#### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Finally ...

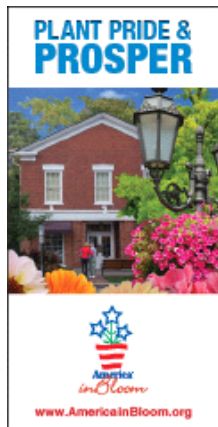


## Hort Couture and Ball Seed

News coming out of Hort Couture is that Ball Seed will be the exclusive distributor of the Culinary Couture Seed lines beginning this fall. They cover the basics—like Pesto basil, HealthSmart peppers and the Mixology line of tomatoes—but they've got so many other unique offerings in cascading herbs, greens and even endive, if I recall correctly.

Over the years I've been consistently impressed with the uniqueness of the varieties in the Culinary Couture line, believing them to be items that get foodies into the garden and keep them experimenting there year after year. With Ball Seed doing the distribution, these cool genetics may get some much deserved further exposure to both growers and grower-retailers.

Ball Seed will also have exclusive rights to sell unrooted cuttings of Hort Couture's Avant Garde annuals, which includes the ever-popular Under the Sea coleus, Glitterati geraniums and Glamouflage petunias. You can still find liners from other brokers, too. Production of those will be



at Peace Tree Farm, Wenke Greenhouses, Wenke Sunbelt and Meadowlands Horticultural up in Vancouver.

Also important to note is that there is no longer a pot requirement for the program. And despite not being at the California Spring Trials, Hort Couture does indeed have new varieties for the 2019 season—more than 40 of them! You can find them and more in the new [Hort Couture Buyers Guide](#). Pay particular attention to the line of edible flowers named Garnish. Edible flowers are all over Food Network so you know these are on trend!



All varieties will be available on Ball Seed WebTrack and will ship from the Ball Horticultural Company facility in West Chicago, Illinois.

### Speaking of Ball ...

Ball Seed has a whole bunch of stuff for the 2019-2020 season and you can learn about it all in the new Ball Seed Catalog. That's right—it covers two years! It features hundreds of new products, too. It must be heavy because it clocks in at 292 pages. This year's printing has a new easy-to-use, color-coded indexed format to help you find stuff fast.



Check out the digital version at [www.ballseed.com/catalogs](http://www.ballseed.com/catalogs). Or connect with a real person and get a printed copy of the catalog by calling 800-879-BALL.

Winner of over 30 awards for exceptional disease resistance.  
A great landscape plant!  
Click here to see a short video.

**Flower Carpet**  
Ground Cover / Roses

The advertisement features a close-up image of vibrant pink roses on the left. The text is set against a dark green background on the right.

## AmEx Wins In Supreme Court

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out a lawsuit accusing American Express of deterring competition. The lawsuit claimed that AmEx prohibited merchants from directing customers to cards with lower fees. The ruling, which was 5 to 4, indicated that American Express's rules about its services for merchants do not violate antitrust laws.

In a [Chain Store Age article](#), the National Retail Federation is quoted as saying about the ruling, "The American Express rules in question have amounted to a gag order on retailers' ability to educate their customers on how high swipe fees drive up the price of merchandise. By denying merchants the right to simply ask for another card or offer an incentive for using a preferred card, the Supreme Court has undermined the principle of free markets where one company should not be allowed to dictate the practices of an entire industry in order to protect its business model."

AmEx was sued in 2010 by the Justice Department to drop its rules prohibiting merchants from encouraging customers to use lower-fee cards (Visa and MasterCard had already done so). A

U.S. District Court ruled in 2015 that AmEx was violating antitrust law. A 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in AmEx's favor when the credit card company appealed. At that point, the 11 states that joined the Justice Department's lawsuit appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Stated American Express after the ruling, "The Supreme Court's decision is a major victory for consumers and for American Express. It will help to promote competition and innovation in the payments industry."



## Coming Up at Cultivate

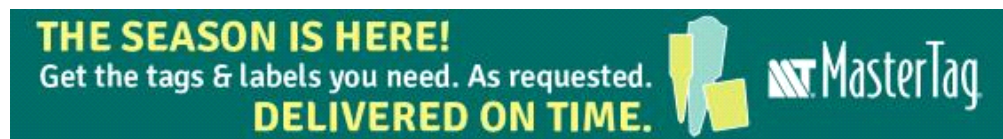
Cultivate'18 is just around the corner, specifically July 14-17 in Columbus, Ohio. With the trade show kicking off in just over two weeks, have you decided what you're attending, who you need to see and how you're going to entertain yourself? If not, I've made a list of a few things you might be interested in:

**Garden Retail Tour.** This tour takes place Saturday, July 14, with our very own Jen Polanz as Bus Captain! The group will be heading to all three Bremec Garden Centers locations. Over the course of the day, the group will visit each of Bremec's garden centers to see what they're doing to stay relevant and successful.

**Retail Peer2Peer Workshop: Selling a Retail Experience with Can't Miss Events and Workshops.** Also happening on July 14, this half-day workshop will feature experienced retailers explaining how they pull off their most successful events. You'll have the opportunity to share your own ideas and also be given resources to help you plan your own can't-miss events.

**Young Grower/Young Retailer Awards presentations.** We will once again be crowning this year's Dümme Orange Young Grower and Young Retailer at the annual Unplugged event on Monday evening, July 16. Hosted by AmericanHort's GenNext group, Unplugged is a fun time to wind down from an exhausting day. Festivities kick off at Callahan's (520 Park St.) at 8 p.m. with the awards beginning at 8:30 p.m. Come cheer on your peers!

Peruse the Cultivate'18 schedule [HERE](#) and sign up for all the above. And if you'd like to meet up with me for a chat about anything—how your year is going, maybe a new product I can't miss, et cetera—drop me a line at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com) and we'll set up a time!



## Speaking of Jen ...

Jen Polanz is on the GCA Summer Tour of Seattle-area IGCs as we speak! She's been having a great time out there. Here's a bit of what she wrote to me about it:

"What's been most impressive on this tour is the quality of the plant material. You can probably credit in equal parts the expertise of the growers/retailers and the temperate albeit rainy climate for that. We have seen some *gorgeous* plants on this tour."

She also sent along a few photos from Swansons Nursery in Seattle.





These are from Swansons' houseplant department. So orderly! She loves the dinosaurs (so do I) and the idea of using large pottery with a glass top as a display table.

Jen also reports that Ernest Wertheim is doing a great job as the tour expert. Way to go, Ernest!



### Speaking of GCA ...

The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual GCA Best Garden Center Bathroom Awards is a go! The Garden Centers of America has opened submissions for this year's competition for the industry's best restrooms, with deadlines for entry being July 6<sup>th</sup> at midnight Eastern.

Who'd have thought an award recognizing bathrooms would go into its eighth year? But it has—and in doing so has really brought home to all in the garden retail business that a clean and inviting restroom goes a long way in providing customers with a favorable shopping experience.

Maybe you have one of the best bathrooms in the business? If you think so, you could win the Gold Award, which includes a free registration for the 2019 GCA Summer Tour. Gather up some jpegs of your prized bathroom, a description, the concept behind the design and its benefits to your garden center. Send all that along with info for the store and a contact person to [BestBathrooms@GardenCentersofAmerica.com](mailto:BestBathrooms@GardenCentersofAmerica.com).

## Need Another Tour?

If so, the upcoming Farwest Show has one for you. And it has a theme, too: "Building Your Independent Garden Center's Brand Within Your Community." Taking place on Tuesday, August 21 and sponsored by The Peters Company, the tour group will visit four Portland, Oregon-area garden centers: two Portland Nursery locations (Division Street and Stark Street in Portland), and two Al's Garden & Home locations (Sherwood and Wilsonville).

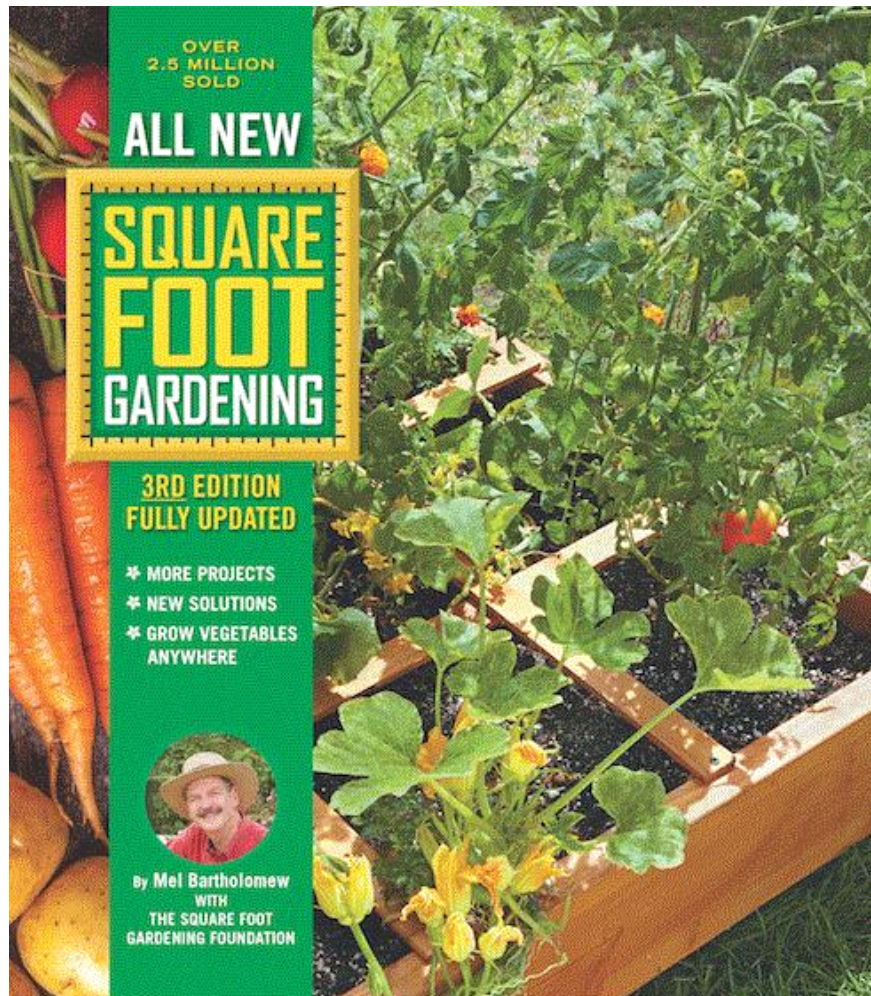
The tour will be led by retail expert Anne Obarski, who will go through each location and explain how each store creates brand recognition. She'll reveal the secrets of keeping a consistent brand across several store locations while also letting each store respond to its neighborhood's preferences and values.

Find out more about the tour and register for it [HERE](#).

## World Square Foot Gardening Day

Did you know July 1 is World Square Foot Gardening Day? It's a day set aside to honor the square foot gardening concept originator and the Square Foot Gardening Foundation founder Mel Bartholomew. As an avid community gardener, I can tell Mel's legacy is strong—so many people adhere to its principles in these small urban spaces.

There's a formal 24-hour online global celebration component to Square Foot Gardening Day, which will take place on [FACEBOOK](#) and [INSTAGRAM](#). There will be giveaways, live Q&As, announcements and such. One of those giveaways is a package of Square Foot Gardening goodies (enter [HERE](#) to win). And maybe they'll also give away an advance copy of the third edition of "All New Square Foot Gardening: MORE Projects NEW Solutions—GROW Vegetables Anywhere," coming out this fall.



Did you know that Mel founded the Square Foot Gardening Foundation with the mission to “help end world hunger, one square foot at a time?” I didn’t. And while I am not sure how quickly that end will come, I do know that the square foot gardening concept can do a lot to minimize the harm of food deserts in urban areas.

If you’d like details on the upcoming book release, find those [HERE](#).

## Finally ...

Last week I was on vacation (kinda sorta) and popped into my favorite vacation-time shoe store. I spoke to the owner as usual because he usually has some pretty good observations about retail. His comments to me this time were about how those fully functional and comfortable “hippie” sandals, Birkenstocks, have been gaining in popularity with the young people. I love my muted green pair, but the “kids” like colors, sparkles and patterns, he says—the funkier, the better. And it’s not just Birks. Super-supportive Dansko clogs are coming out with fun patterns, as well. Some even consider the limited-run colors a collectible. Huh.

So I wasn’t surprised when I received a press release earlier this week from research firm Mintel saying that “younger consumers are finding they don’t have to sacrifice style for comfort.” And I had confirmation from a retailer, too!

What’s my point? I’m not totally sure I have one. Except maybe life is too stressful and too short to walk around with aching feet. And if your feet are happy, the rest of you is prepared for

whatever comes next. And, maybe those kids do have some sense after all.

And yes, I did buy shoes. Two pair! One comfy sneaker and the other a slipper bootie. Because winter is coming.

Oh hey, it's finally summer! If you have any comments on your season thus far, or have any additional questions, comments or suggestions, email them to me at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).



Ellen Wells  
Editor-at-Large  
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