

Bougainvilleas, biophilia, hibiscus and more



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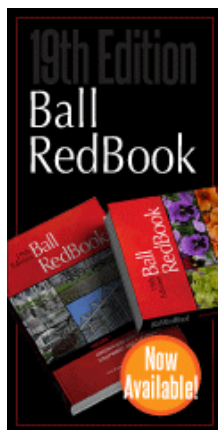
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# TROPICAL TOPICS

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Blooming Bougainvilleas  
The Benefit of Biophilia  
Planting Tunnels with Trees  
Heady Hibiscus  
Finally ...



## Ball Culture Guide

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
SEED GERMINATION

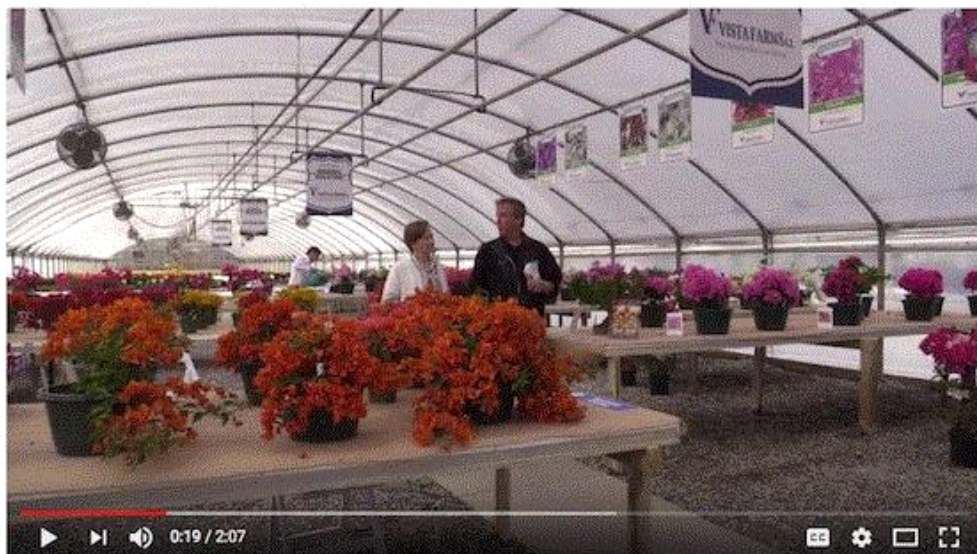
By JIM NAU

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## Blooming Bougainvilleas

The Bobbleheads (that would be Chris Beytes and I when we travel to Spring Trials) had two questions come in via the *GrowerTalks* YouTube Channel. Both questions were posted on videos we took of bougainvillea grower Vista Farms, one from 2014 and the other from 2016. Essentially both questions were the same: Pretty and all, but how do you get them to bloom?



2016 Spring Trials: Vista Farms

If this Bobblehead viewer had that question, I am sure there are a thousand others out there wondering the same thing—and just maybe you're wondering, as well. So I went directly to the

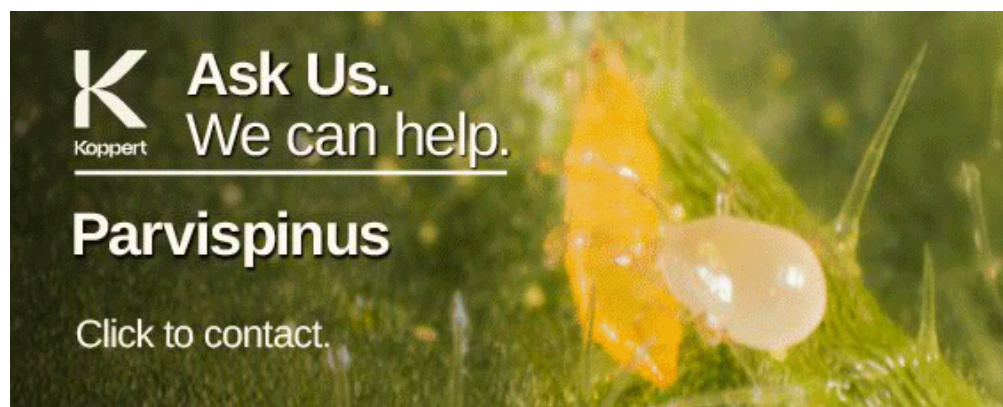
source, **Vista Farms** owner Jerome O'Neill, to find the answer.

Here's what Jerome had to offer:

"Thanks for your question about our favorite crop! Information regarding flowering bougainvilleas is mostly anecdotal. Some believe that bougainvilleas are short-day plants yet others believe that blooming is a response to water stress. In the tropics in the northern hemisphere, the heaviest blooms occur during our winter, December through March. This coincides with the short-day theory. However [this timing] is also our dry season, which would support the water stress theory. My observation is that there are two cycles: plant growth and flowering. When the plant is growing vigorously, blooming is sparse. When plant growth slows down, blooming occurs.

"So, how do I get my bougainvilleas to bloom? First, some basics: bougainvilleas need full sun. If you are growing in a greenhouse, do not shade. If planting in the landscape, select a spot that has full sun all day or a minimum of shade. If your bougainvilleas are in containers, use a well-drained substrate, peat-bark-sand/soil-based mixes work well. If you are fertilizing, back off on the nitrogen and increase phosphorous levels (9-45-5 or similar work well). Induce water stress by allowing the plants to wilt slightly between watering, avoiding excess water. In the landscape, you might want to reduce irrigation cycles. This can be done over a period of one or two weeks. Once buds form, maintain the substrate slightly moist but not wet, always on the dry side."

Thanks, Jerome! Whether you're a grower or an interested consumer, this is information you can certainly use.



## The Benefit of Biophilia

It occurs to me that I haven't reported on the most *Tropical Topics*-related occurrence of August's IGC Show in Chicago. And that would be something mentioned by keynote speaker Dr. Charlie Hall, Ellison Chair of International Floriculture at Texas A&M. What does a floriculture industry economist speaking at a garden retail trade show have to do with tropicals, houseplants and such?

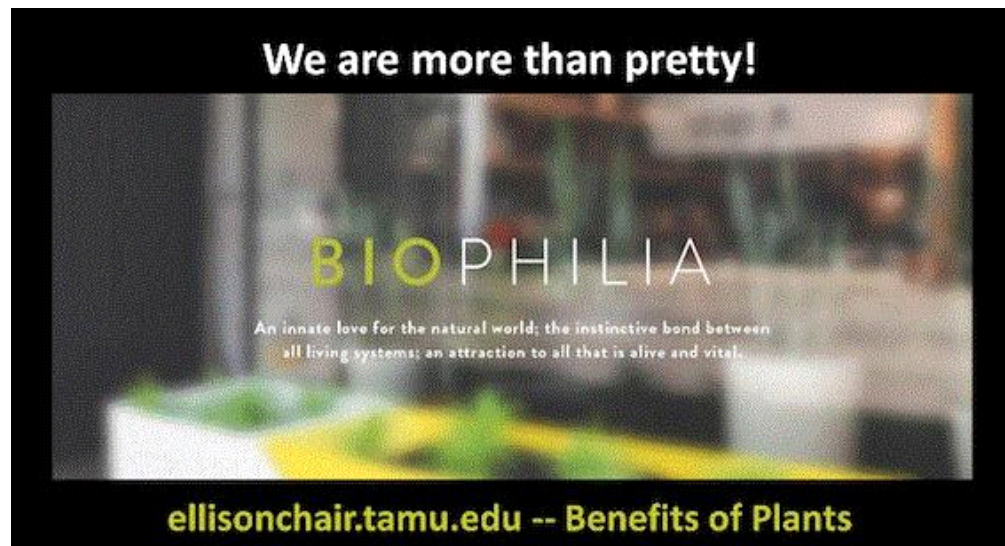
Easy—it's about biophilia. We talk about biophilia, defined by biologist E.O. Wilson as "the urge to affiliate with other forms of life," frequently here. In our case, biophilia is the desire to be in or surrounded by nature, and more specifically, plants. It's likely what's behind the houseplant/succulent/cactus trends.

But what's the connection between Charlie and biophilia though? He argued during his talk that people want the things that enhance their quality of life. Boiled down to the basics, quality of life encompasses social, physical, psychological, cognitive, environmental and spiritual well-being. The horticultural industry—especially that portion dealing with indoor environments—is positioned to serve all of those "well-beings" through its offering of biophilic environments.

The key is in how it's presented, its "packaging." Can we package our products and services in a manner that makes them valuable, relevant and authentic to those either directly or indirectly



seeking the benefits of biophilia? This, Charlie says, is specifically the opportunity for independent garden centers, but it's certainly an opportunity for growers, retailers and service providers who deal in interior plants and interiorscaping.



From Dr. Hall's presentation. Go ahead, visit that website!

Do yourself a favor: Click on [THIS LINK](#). It'll take you to the Benefits of Plants page on Dr. Hall's website. Scroll down past the "Other popular websites" section to read his value proposition for the future. It's enlightening, as it could transform your thinking about the benefit of what you're providing to society. It's not just pretty plants after all.



## Planting Tunnels with Trees

Biophilia is the underlying concept behind a new project proposed for Seattle. An enewsletter from the Green Plants for Green Buildings organization alerted me to a possible biophilic "landscaped canyon" in a defunct tunnel.



The six-block Battery Street portion of the tunnel, which is now used for vehicular traffic, would have its roof removed and would be repurposed as a landscaped canyon of sorts that would be a “green belt” reconnecting downtown Seattle with its waterfront.

It’s just a proposal at the moment, but it’s certainly inspiring. Imagine what kind of tropical landscaped canyons could be created elsewhere—with or without roofs!

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## Heady Hibiscus

Hibiscus are beautiful tropicals and have a great many uses—as an ornamental hedge, as patio perk-me-ups, as indoor conservatory-type bloomers and now as the latest trendy recipe ingredient.

Sure, hibiscus in tea is nothing new. And I’ve seen hibiscus syrups used in cocktails for a few years. But how about candied hibiscus in ice cream? Or a Hibiscus Squeeze mocktail, lemonade with a touch of hibiscus? Yes, please!



Flor de Jamaica, as the dried hibiscus flowers are known in Central American and Caribbean cuisine, are also used in savory dishes like this [Hibiscus and Arugula Pasta](#) dish and ceviche. This [ARTICLE](#) will fill you in on all the dishes hibiscus flowers are finding their way into. Be forewarned—you'll get hungry.

### Finally ...

I'm going to leave this Gizmodo article about the latest kerfuffle on the Houseplant Hobbyist Facebook group [HERE](#) for your amusement.

Read it without a shirt on at your own risk.

Comments, questions or news to share? Just drop me a line at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

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

**Ellen Wells**  
Editor-at-Large  
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