

PW & Classic Caladiums, “wellness” startups and indoor plant pots



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TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Proven Winners & Classic Caladiums

You may or may not have read about the new Proven Winners/Classic Caladiums partnership that my colleague Chris Beytes wrote about in *Acre's Online* earlier this week. If you have not heard, this partnership, which starts officially in July for the 2019-2020 season, gives Proven Winners the exclusive on 20 of Classic Caladium's "best, most unique varieties" (as the press release describes them), with more varieties added each year. They'll be sold with a branded Proven Winners pot. Finished plants will come through Proven Winners' annual propagator network: Four Star Greenhouse and Pleasant View Gardens in the U.S. and Nordic Nurseries and Sobkowich Greenhouses in Canada. Bulbs will ship direct from Classic.

Chris being Chris, he teased a few more details out of the folks at Proven Winners and Classic Caladiums. Here they are in summary:

On why Proven Winners did this partnership: "As we look to expand our brand, we are focused on finding innovators that are the best in their field ... Classic is the leading worldwide supplier of caladiums—they have exclusive breeding and extensive production experience. And we wanted to add more sun/shade varieties with a tropical look and feel to the Proven Winners brand for containers, combinations and in the landscape," wrote Dave Konsoer of Proven Winners.

On Classic's extent of exclusivity, the company's national sales manager Nelson Darden said, "Classic has been developing unique genetics for years, which gives us a strong and stable supply of great new varieties ... We will still provide our current list of genetics to our existing customers, but not under the Proven Winners brand. Classic is the world's largest commercial caladium producer. Our continued research and development will provide opportunities for all customers to benefit."

Chris' last question to Nelson was about the caladium supply, noting that the majority of the nation's crop is grown in Central Florida, a bad weather magnet. I've written about caladium and weather issues in *Tropical Topics* before ([HERE](#) and [HERE](#)). "Classic has consistently evolved,

learning from weather events,” answered Nelson. “We have invested considerable capital in improved production practices to ensure we have strong, vibrant, sustainable stock plants that improve bulb quality, consistency and size.” Last September I had the good fortune to discuss Classic’s advances in weather-informed growing techniques with Nelson and Classic’s owner, Richard Hollander. You can read more about what Classic has learned from Central Florida’s fickle weather and how they’ve adjusted cultural practices [HERE](#).

I had a crack at teasing out a bit more information, too, in a conversation with Marshall. I can tell you that all of the Proven Winners varieties will be sold to growers as painted and de-eyed. That’s because Classic has found that painted and de-eyed tubers produce a higher-quality crop, and that’s what Proven Winners wants. Good call. They’ll also be looking into some bagged versions for online sales of dry tubers. And because caladiums are such awesome plants in combo containers, they’ll be “playing around” with including them in their Proven Winners recipes. Can’t wait for that!



Blushing Bride in a Proven Winners pot.

Marshall said he was surprised at the international interest this has elicited, with orders coming in from around the globe. “They must have read Chris’ newsletter!”



Wellness Startups

Houseplants have officially hit the big time. How do I know? Because plant shops—far different from suburban garden centers—have been labeled “wellness startups” in this February 2019 *Fast*

Company article.

Wellness startups peddling plants? It's a piece obviously written by an outsider to our industry—and that is *exactly* the reason you should read it, because the writer clearly brings a different perspective—an entrepreneurial *Fast Company* perspective—to the plants and products you are dedicated to growing. Here are a few of the major points I pulled out that potentially show how others see the world of tropicals and houseplants:

- The author points to a National Gardening Survey that found that of the 6 million people who started gardening in 2016, 80% of them were aged 18 to 34, a good portion of that age range being Millennials. Eliza Bank, founder of [The Sill](#), says it's the need to cut the anxiety that Millennials live with—loans and city living, for example—that is driving houseplant sales. “We position plants and our brand as the break in all this. It's the antidote to this unfortunate thing that our entire generation suffers from: anxiety. And plants really can be part of the cure.”
- These plant-selling wellness startups are using techniques that other online success stories like Casper (mattresses) and Away (luggage) are using: convenience, branding and experiential retail.
- Since plants are commodities (so says the article, not me), these stores are making their money on “the extras:” pots, pins, T-shirts, totes. Said Eliza Banks, “We could just focus on plants, and every new product launch could be a potted plant, but our customer has other things that are important to her and if we want her to express her love for plants, it shouldn't just have to happen with the product itself.”
- New York-based [Horti](#), a houseplant subscription service, sends its customers' first shipment in pieces. Why? So they can learn how to pot a plant.

Give the entire article a read and weigh in with any comments [HERE](#). I'd love your thoughts on this and how it might influence your own business model.



Speaking of Wellness

If you haven't signed up for the e-newsletter from the Green Plants for Green Buildings organization, you should. Each issue includes links to articles that explain the importance of biophilia, designing green spaces in and around buildings and the general importance of being “green.” I'm learning a ton about the importance of biophilia in office design. Here's one of the latest stories they reposted, “[Biophilic Office Designs Drive Productivity & Creativity](#),” originally published on a site called European CEO. The article does a great job at pointing out that it's not just about creating “pretty” work spaces. It's about improving the well-being of the employees.



The Amazon Spheres are three spherical conservatories on the headquarters campus of Amazon in Seattle, Washington.

And here's another [LINK](#) GPGB shared to an article that explains emerging trends in workplace architecture—including designs that promote employee well-being and happiness.

If you are in the business of convincing others that biophilic work spaces are a benefit to the bottom line, GPGB is a valuable resource for all those articles you want to be sharing. Find them at www.greenplantsforgreenbuildings.org and follow them on Twitter @GPGBdotORG.



Pots for Indoor Plants

Did you catch the cover of the February edition of *Green Profit*? It's replete with beautiful houseplants. And the article to which the cover refers isn't even about houseplants—it's about "Pots for the Indoor Jungle."



Managing editor Jennifer Polanz rounded up not just the latest trends in indoor pottery, but also pulled together some fabulous examples to illustrate those trends. My favorite line from the piece is, "We're saying terra cotta is the new black ...". I remember someone declaring a decade or so ago that the days of terra cotta were long gone. Not true! Read the [ARTICLE HERE](#) to find out what pots and trends you should be using and selling.

Comments, questions or news to share? Just drop me a line at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

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