

A few of my favorite things: whiskey, renewable energy, organics and birds



*A sustainable e-newsletter from GrowerTalks and Green Profit*

**GROWERTALKS**  
MAGAZINE

**greenPROFIT**  
MAGAZINE

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2019

subscribe



# greenTalks

sustainability e-news

Don't miss the premier scientific conference for plant scientists and horticulturists!

ASHS has been bringing together researchers, scientists, industry, academia, government, and students to cultivate ideas and share the latest horticultural advances since 1905.

**NETWORK, LEARN, COLLABORATE, AND SHOWCASE YOUR WORK AT ASHS 2026!**

American Society for Horticultural Science



**Find an Expert**  
*We know greenhouses!*



### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Organic Hemp
- Hedgerows for Birds
- Birds, Part 2
- New NOSB Members
- Favorite Things: Whiskey & ?
- Hermann Holtkamp
- Greenhouses

**SELL MORE**

Better Garden Performance

PAV

PROVEN WINNERS

## USDA Paves Way for Organic Hemp

At the end of November, the **USDA clarified their updated policy** on the organic certification of industrial hemp. It allows for those producing hemp in the U.S. under the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program to get certified organic by following the updated instructions.

The USDA estimates that U.S. hemp sales may hit \$25 million in 2020 and exceed \$100 million in 2022. So organic clarity is good news for the booming hemp/CBD market.

However, in this week's issue of *Acres Online*, Chris Beytes warned that from a production standpoint, growers face some major challenges with hemp in general. He wrote:

*"Estimates are that half a million acres were licensed for hemp growing this year, but only about half of that was planted. Even worse, only 40% to 50% of what was planted made it to harvest."*

*The challenges? Wet weather; pests such as Southern blight and bipolaris leaf spot and corn earworm (which apparently love the stuff); plus lack of infrastructure, capital and labor to harvest and dry the crop. On top of that, despite the lack of harvest, there doesn't appear to be a lack of supply, so prices are declining."*

**Koppert is the BioSolutions Company**

## Helping Birds, Part 1

After the startling [report on the decline of North American birds](#), we're starting to see some helpful solutions hit the news. First up, University of California researchers published a [study](#) in *Ecosphere* looking at how improved habitats can help birds prey on insects and provide insect control.

As you might already suspect, hedgerows helped the birds, in addition to attracting beneficial insects. In the study's case, hedgerows improved the rate of birds eating up those pesky codling moth cocoons. So if you have room for a hedgerow, or your hedgerows could use some improvements, it's a great way to add bird habitats and maybe gain a little extra outside pest control help, too.



## Helping Birds, Part 2

There's a new partnership that aims to help consumers provide better native habitats for birds. Bower & Branch, a group of independent growers and retailers, has just partnered with the National Audubon Society to promote native trees and plants. While some consumers may instinctively think a bird feeder is the best option, providing better natural habitats (food and shelter) is the real key here. And yes, live horticulture products, again, for the win.

Through an exclusive licensing agreement, Bower & Branch will offer branded native trees and plants with an Audubon seal of approval, indicating which products are beneficial to birds as either food or shelter. These will be available beginning in 2020 at member garden centers and at [www.bowerandbranch.com](http://www.bowerandbranch.com). As part of the partnership, [Audubon.org](http://Audubon.org) will direct consumers to Bower & Branch retailers and the website for native trees and plants.



## New Members of NOSB

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), which makes recommendations to the USDA's National Organic Program, has five new members.

- Nathaniel Powell-Palm, Cold Springs Organics in Belgrade, Montana, will serve in a farmer seat.
- Kimberly Huseman, Director of Specialty Ingredients for Pilgrim's, will serve in a handler seat.
- Gerard D'Amore of Munger Farms will serve in a handler seat.
- Mindee Jeffery, Eastside Food Co-op Grocery Manager, will serve in the retailer seat.
- Wood Turner, Senior Vice President of Sustainability for Agriculture Capital, will serve in an environmental protection and resource conservation seat.

These new members will have five-year terms beginning in January 2020, and they'll have to deal with a lot of the hot, contentious issues in the organic world. You can read more about them [HERE](#).

## A Few of My Favorite Things: Whiskey and Renewable Energy

This isn't my Christmas wish list. (Okay, gifts of whiskey and solar panels will be accepted.) But the real story is NatureFresh Farms in Leamington, Ontario, which uses some innovative wood waste sources to run their biomass boilers and heat their greenhouses. They say they divert about 15,000 tons of wood waste from the landfills each year.

They source their wood waste from a number of local companies, including broken pallets from a wood products company. Their local waste management company even sorts and grinds clean scrap wood they collect and delivers it to the farm. But the most original source of wood for a biomass boiler that I've ever heard of? Whiskey barrels.



Hiram Walker, a whiskey producer in Windsor, Ontario, sends them about 400 empty culler whiskey barrels each month, along with used bungs, wood shavings and damaged pallets. NatureFresh grinds up the whiskey barrels with a slow-speed shredder that rips the barrels apart and collects the steel bands with large magnet. Once the steel is separated, they run the larger wood pieces through their regular wood grinders to get a smaller wood chip size appropriate for the boilers. The metal scraps collected from the barrels get sent to a local metal recycling company.

The other fun fact from biomass boilers? NatureFresh Farms collects the ashes and uses them in their expansion construction. They spread them to create a solid base underneath new parking lots and driveways.

A great story of how to make biomass boilers work with local wood waste sources. You can read more about their venture [HERE](#).

## MPS-A+ for Hermann Holtkamp Greenhouses

Hermann Holtkamp Greenhouses, Inc., of Nashville, Tennessee, has joined the growing legion of MPS-A+ certified growers. Known for their Optimara African Violets and part of the Optimara Group, the business was founded in 1904 in Germany and moved to Nashville in 1977.

While sustainability has always been a part of the company, they recently made the commitment to pursue a sustainability certificate from MPS. Their customers had not yet required a certificate, but owner Reinhold Holtkamp Jr. noted, "Doing it ahead of time rather than being asked to do it, shows the true commitment to sustainability of a company."

The count of North American growers with MPS-ABC certificates is up to 83, with more than 3,500 growers participating worldwide. <http://www.my-mps.com/>

Until next time,



Jennifer Duffield White  
[jwhite@ballpublishing.com](mailto:jwhite@ballpublishing.com)

**This email received by 22,651 loyal readers!**

Want to be one of the lucky sponsors who reach those readers of *GreenTalks*? Drop **Paul Black** a line and he'll tell you what a bargain it is!



GreenTalks® is a registered trademark of Ball Horticultural Company in the U.S.