

# Demanding H-2B relief, Dickman's decorations and more on Christmas trees

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*Retail news from inside and outside the green industry*

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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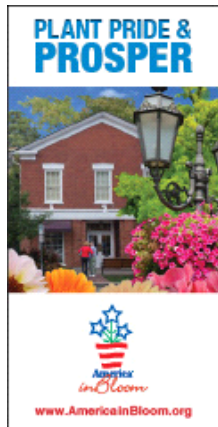
**EXPLORE THE BENEFITS**



## “We Need Cap Relief!”

That was the emphatic first sentence in an email I received from my *GrowerTalks* colleague Jen Zurko late last week. Jen, Ball Publishing’s political wonk and industry advocate, is referring to the H-2B program, of course. And its cap of 66,000 visas for 2020 had already been reached by the middle of November! Imagine 66,000 visas for all of the landscape operations, landscape growers and retailers with landscape divisions—it’s not enough by a longshot. AND, here’s the kicker—landscapers share this pool of 66,000 visas with other industries who need workers, too. We need relief!

The Homeland Security appropriations bill in the House earlier this year included language that made the Secretary of Homeland Security release additional H-2B visas automatically. But unfortunately, the spending bill that passed the House this morning includes the same wording with no cap increase. Since the bill is expected to pass the Senate, Craig Regelbrugge told Jen



that now the battle will shift to asking the Trump Administration to release more visas, similar to what had to happen earlier this year.

So AmericanHort encourages industry folks to contact their elected officials to let them know that we need those additional visas, and to put pressure on the White House and Homeland Security to do this in time for peak season.

What can YOU do? You can click on [THIS LINK](#), which will take you to a form that will go to your own local congressperson and senator, and it'll inform them that you wish for the release of additional H-2B visas.



## Where's JP This Time?

*My colleague Jen Polanz is back from a recent trip to upstate New York. What was she doing there? On her way north seeking Santa, I'm sure. Here's her quick report:*

I recently popped in to Dickman Farms Greenhouses & Garden Center in Auburn, New York, to check out their holiday spirit. I was not disappointed, as every turn through the store had something that brought a smile to my face.



I wasn't the only one there on a dreary, gray Tuesday, either. Retail General Manager Stephanie Whitehouse was in high demand at the custom wreath and bow station as customers lined up to ask her to make their holiday décor. Fortunately, Stephanie can make bows and talk at the same time (it may be her superpower), and she told me how the station she was standing at is on wheels and becomes a checkout in peak spring and a resource center at other times of the year.



Besides the custom wreaths and bows, Dickman Farms offered a wide selection of porch pot components, kissing balls, swags, silks, bows and ribbons, Christmas trees (which are pre-drilled and displayed on these cool 2x4 squares so customers can see the whole tree standing) ...



**Don't Forget the Live Goods**



... and, of course, gorgeous, high-quality poinsettias of varying sizes, along with other holiday-themed live goods. They also carried décor, ornaments and gifts, but not a tremendous amount. I did like how they accented the gardening tools that make great gifts, too, right up front to call them out.






Look for more photos and details about workshops and holiday buying from my visit in an upcoming *Green Profit* issue!

*And they had "Gift Ideas for the Gardener" signage, too—that's key! Thanks for the visit, JP—if you don't find Santa, I'm sure he'll find you next week!*

**THE SEASON IS HERE!**  
Get the tags & labels you need. As requested.  
**DELIVERED ON TIME.**



## Speaking of Christmas ...

My "Millennials Save Christmas" piece from last week prompted Homer Trecartin Jr. to write in, as it reminded him about an artificial tree storage service he had recently seen. He'd been on a GardenComm Regional Meeting tour in the Indianapolis area, where the group toured [Sullivan Hardware & Garden](#). He said the store has an offsite warehouse and a lot of customers who "pay well" for them to store their artificial trees. As he wasn't taking notes on the details, he suggested I contact wordsmith and *Green Profit* contributor [Katie Elzer-Peters](#), who was also on the tour (and her parents partake in Sullivan's service, coincidentally). Don't mind if I do!

Katie fleshed out a bit more of Sullivan's service by saying that folks who buy a pre-lit tree from Sullivan's can sign up for a service wherein Sullivan's will pick up the tree after the holidays for storing, then fluff it, check the lights and set it up the following year. And then the next year and so on.



Katie's parents' tree—freshly fluffed from Sullivan's!

She said Sullivan's charges a price per foot for the service, "And let me tell you, the service is worth EVERY PENNY," she said, as Sullivan's does so much work with the setup and takedown and all that. "I can say for certain it has helped my parents," Katie said. "There's no way they could manage it on their own and they love the service." Plus, the service keeps the warehouse guys busy during some winter months, too. That's a nice way to keep your key personnel on your payroll and not tempted by a year-long job elsewhere if you let them go seasonally.

How might you offer a similar service at your garden center? Maybe you have storage and can do this with artificial trees. Or maybe you can do a one-time setup and takedown with a real tree—and offer to chip the tree for mulch? Let's brainstorm this! Share your ideas or perhaps your current tree service [HERE](#).



**That's Alotta Trees**

A company storing artificial Christmas trees could make a small fortune from Phyllis Maston. She's a Boston-area woman I saw **FEATURED** on my local CBS news for having 16—count 'em, 16!—decorated Christmas trees. Why so many trees? Because it's "one way of expressing the beauty of Christmas," she said.



She has them in every room in her house. Some are traditional-sized trees and others are small enough to set on a table or counter. No matter the size, Phyllis's trees are seriously decked out. She has trees decorated with hearts, trees with tea cups, trees with cardinals, one with butterflies and one for the kids that's dripping with candy canes. She even has one decorated with toilet paper—guess which room of that house that one is in?

If you did start a tree-storing service, Phyllis would be one of the first people I'd call to consult on the process!

## Gifts Funds to Grow the Industry

Gifts came early for four students this year, thanks to the Spring Meadow - Proven Winners Endowment Fund Scholarships. Dale and Liz Deppe established the fund with the Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) back in 1999 to encourage well-trained and qualified students to become integral members of the green industry. Twenty years later, \$83,750 have been awarded to 22 students since funds became available in 2004.

The four latest winners each received \$2,500 for the 2019-2020 season. Those lucky recipients include:

- Mary Tuski, Michigan State University senior hoping to pursue a Master's degree in nursery production.
- Noah Brown, a North Carolina State University junior studying agricultural business management.
- Amber Lancaster, a University of Arkansas Fayetteville senior interested in propagation, breeding and grafting of fruit trees to find disease-resistant cultivars.
- Jacklyn Stupinski, a second-year student in the two-year horticultural program at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Connecticut who is studying design, propagation and growing.

If you'll be a student in 2020-2021, you can apply for a Spring Meadow - Proven Winners-endowed scholarship beginning in April. Just check the [HRI website](#) around that time, or contact [Jennifer Gray](#) for details.

## Don't Miss These TPIE Sessions

I'm about to book my flights to Fort Lauderdale for my annual pilgrimage to the [Tropical Plant Industry Expo \(TPIE\)](#), January 22-24, and that reminds me to mention two things to you that will make your Thursday at the show just spectacular.

1. **Don't miss the "Shipping Plants: Options of Transportation and Logistics" session.** Have foliage shipping questions? Perhaps this session for plant buyers of all sizes will elucidate your options for shipping and receiving. It's not a one-size-fits-all world when it comes to plant logistics, but moderator Bisser Georgiev of Live Trends Design Group and the plant logistics experts in the session will offer various options—hopefully, one of them will suit your needs. This complimentary session, sponsored by Central Florida Ferns, takes place at 8:30 a.m.
2. **Come to the special Elevating Expectations session: "What's Causing Houseplant Fever?" sponsored by the National Horticulture Foundation.** The session will feature Garden Media Group's Katie Dubow, GrowIt's Mason Day and Ball Publishing's Ellen Wells (hey, that's me!). We will discuss what's driving the houseplant trend and how the industry can embrace it and keep it going. AND, since you're reading this—if you have a topic you'd like me to be sure to include in the discussion, just drop me a line about it [HERE](#). The session takes place at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 23.

Head over to [TPIE.org](#) to find out more information on how to register.

## My New Addition

Many of you have followed the drama surrounding my pup Osa, who stopped taking regular walks around the neighborhood about a year and a half ago. She's improved a bit over this summer, but still, she's not walking like she should.

So, we opted for the solution of last resort. Osa now has a little sister.



Meet Sammie, the one on the right. She came to us with the name Samara—a botanical term—so we decided to keep it. Samara is also a place in Costa Rica, as is Osa, so there's that connection, too. As for Osa, she is now taking longer walks in the neighborhood, showing her little sister all the best spots to pee.

It will indeed be a happy holiday for this furry little family this year.

Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas, folks! I'll see you once more this year with some sort of decade wrap-up. Got anything I should add to it? Send your thoughts on that or anything else to [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

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

Ellen Wells  
Editor-at-Large  
Green Profit

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