

It's a Big 'Ol Goofy World

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MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2020

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

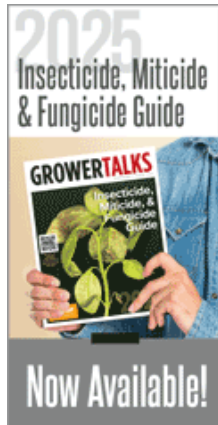
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Our Wacky Wonderful World—Notes from the Edge of Sanity

You may be wondering why the (typical) ending of the newsletter is now at the beginning? Well, it sure seems everything else is goofy these days, so why not join the party. Plus, I just fired up John Prine and he certainly described this **big old goofy world** best. I mean, let's think about how the world has changed, for better or worse, in the last few weeks:

- There's this little global pandemic. It seems to have just about shut down the entire global economy quicker than greased lightning. But somehow the stock markets are acting like that toddler that refuses to stay in timeout ... yikes! Someone's about to get spanked.
- More importantly, it's certainly taking an emotional toll on families across the nation that have lost loved ones. My heart goes out to them.
- And while there's barely a plane in the sky, it seems to translate to a LOT more people having a LOT more time to garden. That's great news for the Green Industry.



GARDENING has NOT been cancelled.

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- Well, great news in the states/cities where the Green Industry has been deemed essential. Don't ask anyone from Michigan about this ... it may start a fist fight.
- Moving on ... the real heroes of this world are finally getting credit. Not some damn politician, but the doctors, nurses, vegetable pickers, cashiers, lawn care workers, garbage folks, power company linemen and mail delivery people (to name a few).
- Fuel prices are about as cheap as when I was in high school and yet I can't go anywhere to celebrate this milestone.
- Oh—and who would have thought professors would be drinking adult beverages while giving lectures (which are all online now)? Not that I know anyone doing it ... I just hear rumors.

But one thing hasn't changed and that's the power of humanity to take a lickin' and keep on being nice to one another—while honing sarcastic abilities to Jedi-like precision. Keep up the good work, folks! It's nice to finally feel essential (sorry, Michigan).



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CAST—The BP Recap

Oh, did I mention above that the California Spring Trials (CAST) went 100% virtual this year for the first time? Well, it was no surprise that it wouldn't be an in-person event, but the participating branding companies, along with the legendary Ball Publishing CAST team, figured out a delightful way to take it all in from the comfort of your favorite chair.



AND they packaged it into an easy-to-follow [Spring Trials Facebook page](#). That's right—the Ball Publishing team figured out yet another way to “make it work.” That's what makes us the best (apologies to the rest).

But that's not all—the Ball Publishing team also has an Instagram page with TONS of photos. We are [@growertalksgreenprofit](#). Don't forget to like the photos. Also, keep in mind we're going to keep the Facebook and Instagram pages going year-round, so check back often.



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Nitty Gritty White Rose

Whoever thought of this name gets a gold star from me because, of course, it must be a reference to one of the best Cali Americana bands ever ([The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band](#), Long Beach, CA). Not to mention this was one of those CAST plants this year, offered by Monrovia Nursery Co., a California staple in the industry. That's the trifecta, folks.



Photo courtesy of Monrovia Nursery Co.

But all music aside ... as for the plant, it's one of the better reblooming white roses to be introduced recently. It's got a good hardiness range from Zones 4 to 9 and offers excellent foliar disease tolerance. Like most roses introduced these days, it has a max size of about 5 ft. (rounded form). But to bloom best it should be pruned hard at least every other year, which may reduce size a bit.

If you're looking for a true white rose, give this one a try.



Tower of Flowers Cherry Wigelia

Looking back 10 (or 100) years, do you remember wigelia? I think most of us would describe it something like ... smells fantabulous, but a huge and unruly deciduous shrub that only blooms for two to three weeks in the spring. In sandy soils, you could throw in the fact that it would defoliated quite early in fall. It was quite the quickie in the landscape, but hung around due to the fact that it was an antebellum taxa that just wouldn't die.

With that auspicious introduction to the genus, let me introduce you to another very descriptive name for a nice new cultivar featured at CAST. **Tower of Flowers Cherry Wigelia** tops out at around 4 ft. in height with a 2- to 3-ft. spread, hence the name. It's got decent cold hardiness (Zones 6 to 9) and the flower color is legit cherry red. PlantHaven did a darn fine job with this one.



Photo courtesy of PlantHaven.

Most weigelas have a panicle-type bloom, but this cultivar (and the Towers of Flowers series as a whole) seems to really accentuate that. It also reblooms a little (not too much) and holds onto foliage late into the season. But heck, even a little rebloom is a bonus. Given the size (perfect for a container plant), great color and decent scent for those self-distancing close to it in a container or surrounding a patio ... why not pull the trigger and give it a shot.



Resources You Can Use in These Wacky Times

The [National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture](#) (NICH) has come up with some wonderful memes to highlight the value of horticulture and they've made these resources available to us all to use however we can. What a great way to keep promoting the essential nature of what we do!



According to the folks at NICH, "We had just finished creating our April memes that celebrate both Earth Day and Arbor Day when COVID-19 modified our plans (just as it changed yours). Many of us are faced with new challenges of suddenly finding ourselves unemployed, working from home, kids out of school, and uncertainty and worry.

"This is a good time to inspire new consumers of horticulture. After all, we can enjoy our

houseplants and garden in the yard. We can even take advantage of horticulture service industries, such as lawn and tree care, and landscape designers, while maintaining a safe social distance.

"With that in mind, our Social Media Committee, and the Health and Community Committee have created a series of engaging memes to get this message out. Don't hesitate to use and share these resources. Please tag [@consumerhort](#) on Instagram and use the hashtag [#PlantsDoThat](#) in all of your posts, so we can track how far they have gone and how many people they reach."

Well done, NICH. We look forward to more photos of gnomes in presumptuous poses.

DHS Suspends Plans to Issue Supplemental H-2B Visas

In a move that made many landscape contractors cringe, on April 2 the Department of Homeland Security announced via Twitter that it's abandoning plans to release supplemental H-2B visas due to the current state of the economy. The DHS tweeted:

To clear up various misreporting—DHS's rule on the H-2B cap is on hold pending review due to present economic circumstances. No additional H-2B visas will be released until further notice. Per the statute, H-2B allocations are set in consultation with [@USDOL](#).

— Homeland Security (@DHSgov) April 2, 2020

On March 5, DHS had announced that it planned to make 35,000 supplemental H-2B visas available this fiscal year in two batches, reserving some visas for workers from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

I personally wonder what "present economic circumstances" DHS is referring to? Yes, I know that DHS is looking at the hospitality industry, but in doing so it's completely ignoring other industries (e.g. landscape contractors and canneries). Do know that AmericanHort is on top of this and working for you landscape contractors in particular, but you need to help out in the effort by supporting [AmericanHort](#).



For those who've been granted H-2B (or H-2A) workers, this doesn't affect you. In fact, [your process has been streamlined this year!](#)

Tips on How to Hold 'Em

While it seems that garden centers and landscape contractors are rocking right now (where deemed essential) consuming a lot of product, I bet a lot of growers are worried about the mid-term. Specifically, worried about product destined for commercial projects in May-October 2020, or speculated based upon residential construction projections and government projects in the latter half of the year. Those prospects are looking pretty bleak right now.



So how do you slow down that product? One wonderful source of information is [e-Gro](#), which just published an article titled "[Tips on How to Hold 'Em.](#)" You woody growers will probably look at this and think that it only applies to herbaceous crops. But not so fast ... it's equally applicable to you! Particularly tips 1 through 4 (although all have considerable crossover) will serve you well as you move through the growing season.

CARES Act Implementation High Priority for AmericanHort

The AmericanHort advocacy team has been busy assessing the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, otherwise known as the CARES Act, as education and outreach to members and the industry shifted into high gear. The bill, the third in a series of COVID-related federal legislation, created new programs, altered existing ones and allocated money to be distributed to affected agricultural industries.

Three portions of the legislation impact the Green Industry: the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, the newly-formed Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), and money allocated to the Department of Agriculture to provide relief to stakeholders severely impacted by the national emergency. Congress allocated \$10 billion for the EIDL loan program and \$348 billion for PPP loans/grants. USDA received \$9.5 billion to deliver agricultural sector relief. The funds include assistance to specialty crop producers.

Eligibility for the EIDL loan program, an existing program under the Small Business Administration (SBA), has been expanded as a result of the CARES Act. Traditionally, eligibility hasn't included agricultural businesses, though AmericanHort believes that under CARES, Agriculture is included.

The PPP program provides eligible businesses with operating loans that may be forgiven if employees are retained. PPP is run by the Treasury Department in coordination with SBA. Applications went live on Friday, April 3. (AmericanHort and its strategic partner K-Coe Isom held an outreach webinar that may be viewed in AmericanHort's Coronavirus Resource Center at americanhort.org/coronavirus.)

One big question remaining is how USDA will deploy its emergency funding. In view of the severe market disruptions now unfolding just as our industry's peak season gets underway, AmericanHort sent a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue on April 3, advocating for the horticulture industry to receive its fair share of relief for severe losses resulting from this devastating crisis. Updates can be found, and are continually updated, at www.americanhort.org/page/coronavirus.

Until next time, stay distant ... stay safe ... be authentic.

Live authentic,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Chappell'.

Matthew Chappell
Editor-at-Large
Nursery & Landscape Insider

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