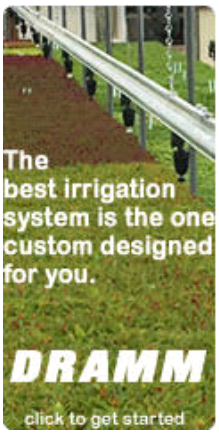
Memorial Day; How it Compares; Box Tree Moth; Robot Bees



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FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 2021

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Memorial Day Results
- Just like other years?
- Your comments and scores
3 Young Growers opine
- So do 3 Young Retailers
Bad news for boxwoods
UGA Industry Open House
Finally ...



Memorial Day results





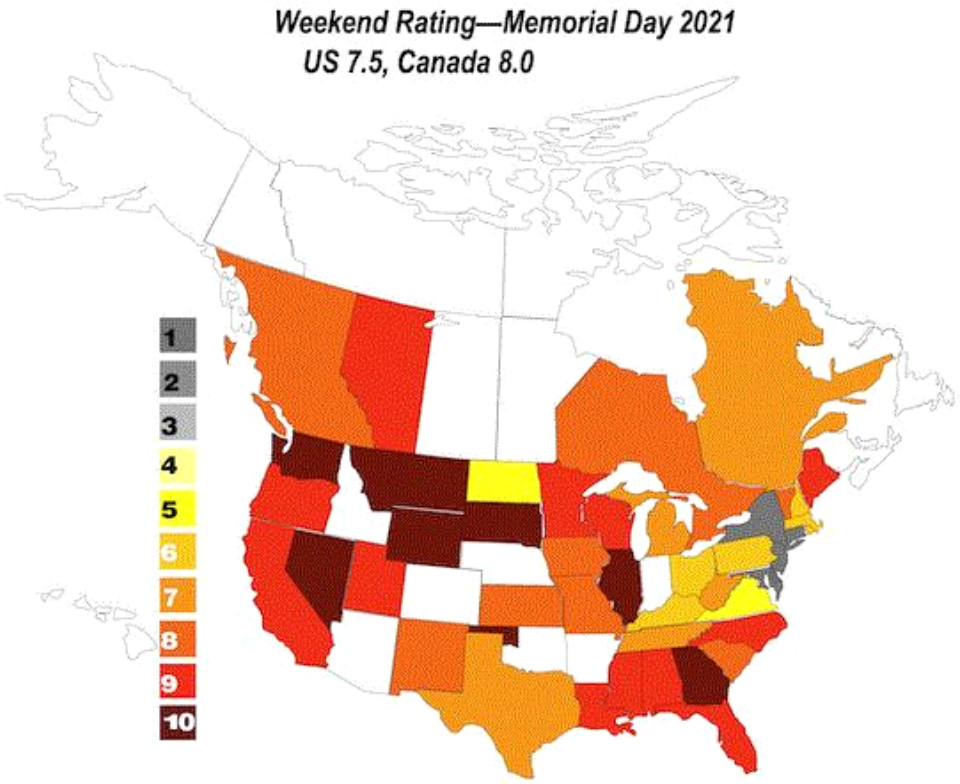




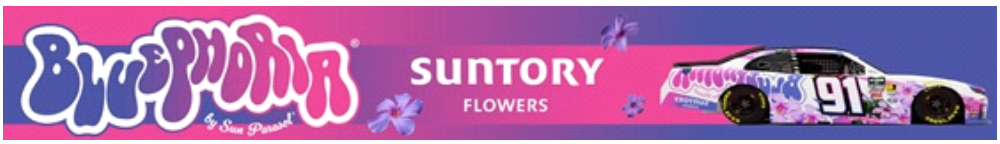
As your scores started coming in this week, I soon realized that the shine is off the apple, the bloom is off the rose and the season is becoming more like a “regular season.” Not that sales from April onward haven’t been record-breaking for many of you. And not that you won’t meet or beat 2020’s results. And not that some of you didn’t have an absolutely killer Memorial Day Weekend (24% of you scored it a perfect 10). It’s just that … well, Abe VanWingerden put it succinctly: “Weather is still king.” Finally, just like we expect, bad weather kept customers away—and there was plenty of bad weather.

For much of the eastern half of the country, the weather flat-out stank. Torrential rain and unseasonable cold led to a near-total washout, and your scores reflected that. I haven’t seen this many 3s and 4s and 5s (and a few 1s) since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, when we were locked down and weren’t sure we’d even be allowed to have a spring. The result was that folks found other things to do and garden centers suffered.

The score? **7.5 in the U.S.** and **8.0 in Canada.** Here’s the map:



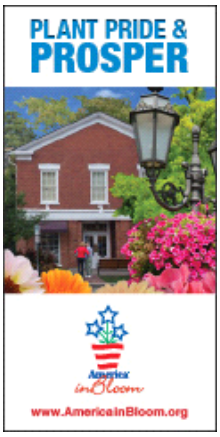
That’s based on 95 scores from 43 states and 4 provinces (you guys are winding down, too, apparently). As I mentioned, 24% of you scored it a 10, so it wasn't all bad. I'd call it a mixed bag.



Just like other years?







Those overall scores do look sorta dismal when compared it to the eight previous record-setting weekends we've enjoyed:

Easter	8.9/10.0
Apil 10-11	8.7/7.9
April 17-28	8.8/8.3
April 24-25	7.7/8.5
May 1-2	9.1/9.6
Mother's Day	9.4/9.0
May 15-16	9.3/10.0
May 22-23	8.9/8.9
Memorial Day	**7.5/8.0**

I mean, come on! What a ride, eh? I told you last week that these pandemic sales are going to spoil us. But it's no wonder sales are tapering off—who else is left to buy anything after all that action?

However, putting aside this spring, and Memorial Day 2020 (which scored 9.2/9.4), compared to other Memorial Days we aren't so far off the mark:

2019	7.7/6.6
2018	7.4/9.3
2017	7.9/8.7
2016	8.1/8.8
2015	7.7/8.6
Average	7.8/8.4

We are just 0.3 and 0.6 off the average, and I believe the miserable weather out east could easily account for that. One of you from New York reported that it was the coldest Memorial Day Weekend since 1979! How bad was it? The East scored 3.8. That's a March score—and I don't even do March scoring! New England was a better 6.3. Here are all the regional scores:

South	8.3
West	9.1
Midwest	8.1
New England	6.3
East	3.8
Mountain	9.7
Plains	7.6
Northwest	9.0

As for Canada beating the U.S. on our three-day weekend (theirs was the previous weekend), I always expect strong scores from Canada late in May because their season doesn't tend to get rolling until now (except in BC, which is more temperate).



Your comments and scores

I'm sharing lots of them this time because you had lots to say relative to your sales and scores, which ranged from 10 down to 1. You'll see it was a mixed bag, from stellar to stinky:

Oregon (10). "Best weekend of the season."—*Kirk Hansen, Sebright Gardens*

South Dakota (10). "Another non-stop, product-flying-out-the-door, three-day weekend (really four; Friday was no different). Doesn't seem like it's going to drop off too fast. Today, June 1, was a continuation of the weekend. I think we're in for a strong June as well."—*Tim L. Sime, Jolly Lane Greenhouse*

Ohio (9). "My rating is just a gut feeling, perhaps swayed by the outstanding season we've had so far. Now, when there's more of a 'normal' traffic flow, it seems pretty slow. Memorial Day sales were about the same as last year, despite being a week later, so Monday alone would have been rated a 10. However, we had a couple nights around 40F heading into the weekend, with the cold still lingering Saturday morning, so that seemed to dampen people's enthusiasm for plant shopping."—*Kim Grant, Strait Gate Greenhouses*

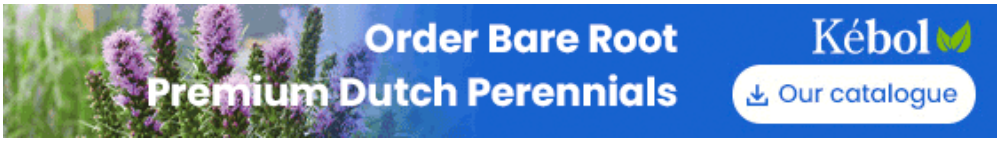
Illinois (9). "Saturday and Sunday were average, but Monday was out-of-the-park busy! We still have lots of annuals in stock and [are] pushing through that inventory. Well-balanced sales in all categories—annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees, pottery, houseplants."—*Candi Scheuermann, Green View Companies*

Iowa (8). "Cool, cloudy weather with a little rain, but product still looks good and people are still planting. Lots of 'never-been-here-before' customers who were in town for graduations. Tree sales still very strong and perennials doing great."—*Kate Terrell, Wallace's Garden Center*

Wisconsin (8). "The weekend weather was perfect here and we were fairly busy. Good sales, but not great sales. People are starting to do other things as more stuff opens up."—*Chris Williams, K&W Greenery*

Oregon (7). "The May excitement had already waned, the month seemed over, and it turned summertime hot. But I don't think any of us could have survived another heavy weekend—we're about ready to collapse. It's been a very good year. And the slowdown finally gave me time to respond and rate the weekend for the first time all spring."—*Ellen Egan, Egan Gardens*

Pennsylvania (7). "The weather in Western PA was dismal Saturday and Sunday (highs in the low 50s, rain all day Saturday), which definitely put a damper on what is usually a busy weekend. We had beautiful weather on Monday, but it was still quieter than normal. It wasn't a BAD weekend by any means, but compared to recent expectations, it was somewhat disappointing. This upcoming weekend looks beautiful, though, so hopefully we'll make up for it then!**"—***Jeremy Gruszka, Bedners Greenhouse*



Your comments and scores, continued

New England, New York (average of 6.3). "Expectations were driven by memories of last week and last year at this time, but both historical events had great weather backing them. This weekend didn't. Sales for the holiday weekend were dowsed by a big rain shield that brought shivery, April-like sales along with genuinely chilly weather. The heaviest rain fell in an arc from Southern Connecticut over to Philadelphia, so their woes became the loudest. Most stores were knocked back to figures better suited for the end of April than the end of May. Maine, by

contrast, escaped the worse of it once again. They had soggy weather as well, but it clipped the state and rushed through pretty quickly. They had a dip, but not a fall.

“Most growers in our area are using the ‘D’ words: disgusting, disaster, destroyed (the bad version). However, isolating the daily figures show a peek at good news. Monday’s sales bounced back to expectations once the good weather returned, so we don’t think the season has shut down yet. Historically, June is nearly as strong as May for us, so we still have half of the spring season to go.”—*Lowell Halvorson, Liberty Family Farms*

Here's how Lowell scored each state Liberty Family Farms serves (he's pretty mathematical about it, as you can see):

ME = 7.1
MA = 6.9
VT = 6.9
NH = 6.8
RI = 6.1
NY = 5.8
CT = 4.7

Michigan (6). “[It’s] that time of year when there are those few customers who get cranky when we don’t have the annuals that they want. We try to explain to them that we grow 95% of what we sell and that our backup supplier is out, but that doesn’t matter to them. A very, very, small percentage of customers are upset, but most are happy for us!"—*Jerome Vite, Vite Greenhouses*

Ohio (5). In southeast Ohio, we received daytime high temps that should have been our lows. Friday, we dumped more than an inch of rain out of the rain gauge. Saturday was a cold and windy brisk 52F. Sunday was a dark and chilly 62F. Monday was better, with sun and mid-70 temps, but it wasn’t enough to make up for Friday, Saturday and Sunday’s lack of traffic flow. After sweating in the upper 80s and lower 90s for seven to 10 days, it really felt cold.”—*Jon Neff, Bob’s Market & Greenhouses*

New Jersey (4). “At least we got Monday. Two days, 3 in. of rain Saturday and Sunday. I can’t complain, though—the state was just about ready to talk about the big ‘D’: drought.”—*Dave Williams, Williams Nursery*

New York (3). “Besides torrential rain and plant shortages, we had the coldest Memorial Day Weekend since 1979. Despite all that, we still did as good as 2019.”—*Jim Boxberger, Monticello Farm Home & Garden*

New York (1). “NO WORDS FOR THIS ONE THAT ARE FIT TO PRINT.”—*Sig Feile, Atlantic Nursery & Garden Shop*

New York averaged 3.2 (on five scores) and New Jersey was even worse, at 2.7, on three scores—so yeah, Sig, we can imagine what you’re saying!



Three Young Growers opine on our industry

Want to know what the next crop of greenhouse industry leaders have to say on the hot topics affecting our business? Then tune in to our FREE webinar on the topic **“Young Grower Nominees Opine on Our Industry.”**



Slated for **Tuesday, June 15,** at 1:00 p.m. Eastern/Noon Central, this one-hour Zoom interview will star the three finalists of our *GrowerTalks*/The HC Companies Young Grower Award. They are:

- Diego Barahona, Costa Farms
- Maddie Maynor, North Creek Nurseries
- Thomas Minter, Loma Vista Nursery

You'll hear these exceptional young talents share their opinions, ideas and concerns about their chosen profession, the wholesale greenhouse and nursery industry. Topics covered by me (your host and question-asker) will include:

- Attracting and keeping talent
- Working with multiple generations
- Future-proofing your business
- Technology vs. talent
- Preventing burnout
- Pay levels in horticulture
- What they want and expect from their employers
- And much more … including your questions!

Register now at www.growertalks.com/webinars. You don't want to miss this one!

And don't forget: One of these fine young minds will be named the WINNER of our annual Young Grower Award during Unplugged at Cultivate'21. I can't wait to see who our judges selected!

Register now for Darwin Perennials University!



You retailers aren’t left out!

While you’re online, be sure to sign up for our retail version of the above webinar, titled, “Young Retailer Nominees on Connecting with Young Consumers.” It will be held the very next day, Wednesday, June 16, at the same time (1:00 p.m. Eastern/Noon Central).

In this live Zoom interview, you’ll meet the three finalists of our *Green Profit*/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award:

- Terra Campbell, Round Rock Garden Center
- Esmeralda Carrasco, Ponderosa Cactus Nursery
- Wyatt Page, Gill Garden Center + Landscape Co.



You’ll hear their experiences in how they’re able to connect with the new gardeners flocking to independent retailers across the country this spring.

Your host, *Green Profit* Managing Editor-at-Large Jen Polanz, will check in with them on the following topics:

- If they have e-commerce and what strategy worked for them
- What consumers are asking for and what they can’t get enough of
- What mediums work best in reaching young consumers
- How new gardeners differ from our existing clientele
- How their employers have helped them reach their potential
- What our industry can do to attract new customers and new retail talent
- Questions asked by YOU, the webinar audience

Again, you can register at www.growertalks.com/webinars.

Did I mention they’re both free?



Bad news for boxwoods

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed that the box tree moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) has been found in the U.S. It was imported into the country via boxwoods shipped in from Ontario. These shipments most likely came in from a nursery in St. Catharines between August 2020 and April 2021, and were delivered to six states—25 retail locations within Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio and South Carolina, and a distribution center in Tennessee.



A native of East Asia that's become a serious pest in Europe, the box tree moth can significantly damage and even kill boxwoods if not treated. It was found to be in the Toronto region in 2018. The caterpillars can defoliate host plants when infestations are heavy and then the larvae come along to consume the bark, girdling and killing the plants. That's a horrible one-two punch.

APHIS is taking action to stop this pest in its tracks. They've issued an order to stop the importation of host plants from Canada, including boxwood, euonymus and holly. They're in the process of finding and destroying the material that was brought in as well, among other measures. If this pest gets to uncontrollable levels, it could devastate the boxwood industry. Keep an eye out for the following and report their presence to your local USDA office or State agriculture department.

Jen Zurko reminded me that we were one of the first ones to write about it in the U.S. It was on the cover of the April 2019 *GrowerTalks*.



Attend UGA's Trial Garden Open House

And when I say "attend," I don't mean online—I mean mean live and in person! Hurray!

The University of Georgia Horticulture Department's annual Industry Open House will be **Wednesday, June 9**, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. It's part of the Southern Garden Tour.



We're told by reliable sources that the garden is in full bloom and looking fabulous as always. The event is free and parking is available per hour at the South Deck. Come on out, urges Garden Manager Sandra Begani! (But do bring a face mask, as the university is still practicing safe COVID practices.)

Questions? Go to ugatrial.hort.uga.edu. Or email Sandra at sbegani@uga.edu.



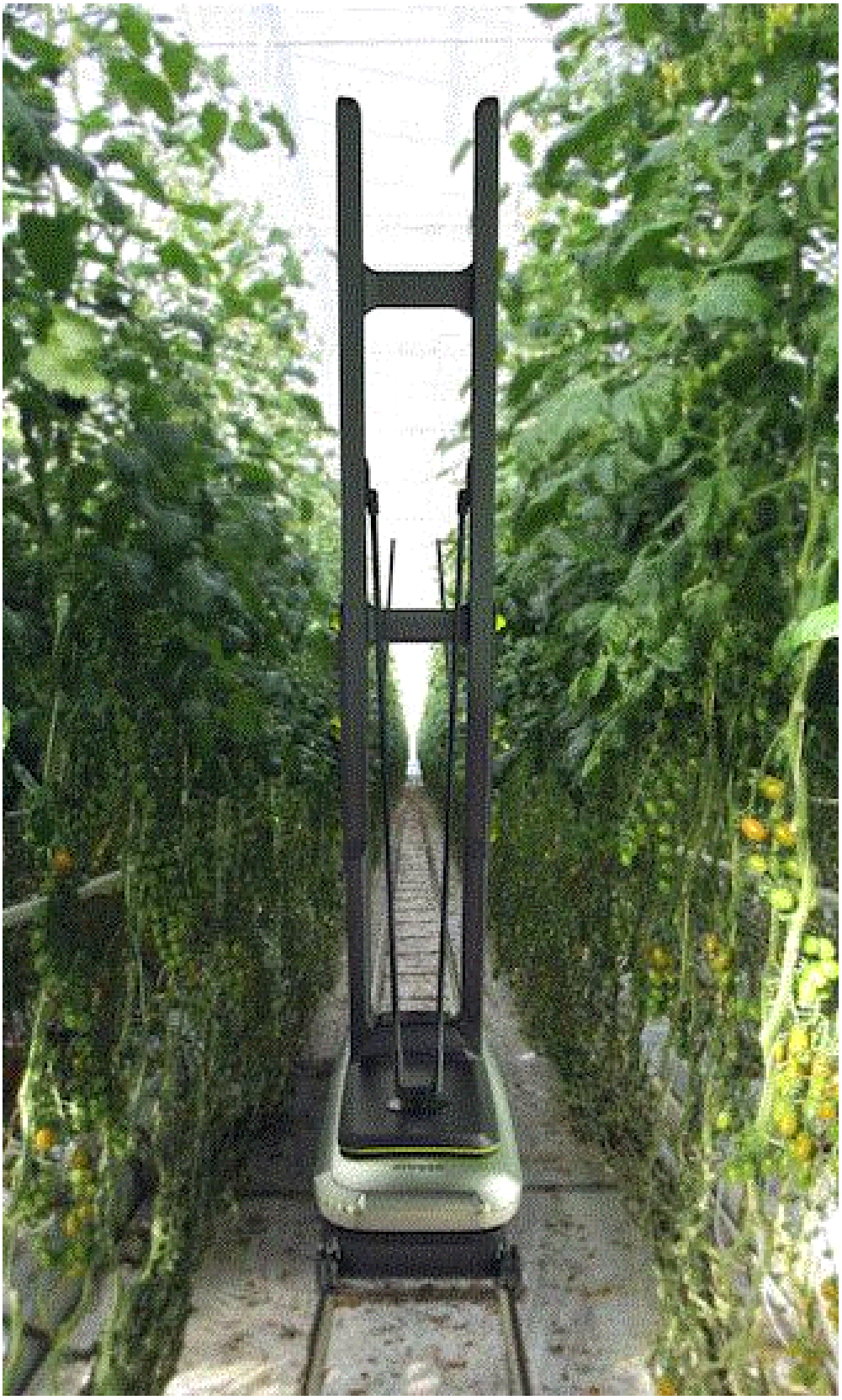
Finally ...

Now we're putting bees out of work?

Biological control and pollination specialists Biobest have invested in an Israeli ag robotics startup called Arugga, with the goal of distributing the company's pollination robots in North America.

Pollination robots? You mean like little buzzing carbon fiber drone "bees"?

Alas, no. The pollination robot turns out to be less interesting, but certainly just as useful. Here's a picture:



As you can see, it rolls along the same rails used by other internal transport systems commonly used in hydroponic greenhouses. Equipped with cameras and artificial intelligence-based computer vision, the robot recognizes flowers ready for pollination. An air-pressure mechanism then applies calibrated air pulses to the selected flower.

Why use this in conjunction with, or instead of, bees?

Arugga says their pollination robot is a non-contact solution that can prevent the spread of diseases by bees; it can work in hot and cold temperatures when bees are inefficient; it avoids the challenges faced by bees in greenhouses equipped with LED lighting; and it enables the use of UV screening to decrease pest stress.

Iddo Geltner, Arugga's CEO says, "We have tested our pollination robots in tomato greenhouses and obtained impressive results. We observed up to 5% added yield versus bees and manual pollination. Simultaneously, our robots address other bottlenecks in the tomato crop. We are now ready to initiate the commercialization stage and have already taken significant steps to start deployment of our technology in the USA and Canada."







See you next time!



Chris Beytes
Editor
GrowerTalks and *Green Profit*

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