

Spring So Far; RIP Atlee Burpee; Fire at Timbuk; Bonnie's New GH



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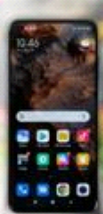


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News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

How is spring breaking thus far?  
"... projections will be exceeded"  
In memoriam: Atlee Burpee  
Goldsmith memorial at CAST  
Fire at Timbuk Farms  
Bonnie's new 'Bama GH  
Master Nursery's top vendors  
New fungicide: Postiva  
Finally ...

# NEW FOR 2026



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## How is spring breaking down south & out west?

Before I dive into this week's news and views, a question for my faithful readers who ply their trade where the weather is warm and the sun is shining: How is the 2022 gardening season looking thus far?

I won't be starting my regular weekly sales survey until the first weekend of April when things really get rolling, but those of us "up north" are curious how it's going in the Southeast, Southwest and Northwest where the gardening season starts before ours.

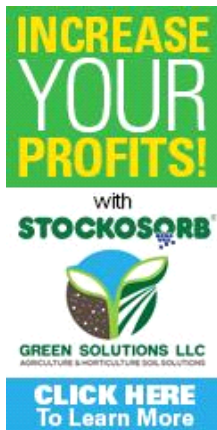
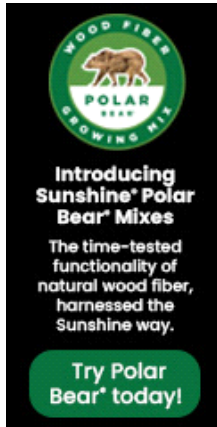
Please weigh in to [beytes@growertalks.com](mailto:beytes@growertalks.com) with a few comments and even a 1-10 score if you'd like (although they won't go into my official tally). I'll share what I learn next time.

Thanks in advance!

## Spring so far: "First-quarter projections will be exceeded"

Regular contributor Abe VanWingerden keeps reams of accurate daily and weekly sales data, and seeing how he serves much of the Southeast, I figured he'd have a good, broad view of how the season is breaking, at least in that part of the country, so I asked him how things looked thus far. Here's his reply:

*Spring so far: First, it is early. But six of the seven weeks so far (since February 1) have been*



above expectations and we feel confident that if we were a public company, we would be whispering to the “street” that our first-quarter projections will be exceeded.

We went into spring with about an 8% dollar increase expectation and a flat unit increase with a mix of pricing/size changes/etc. driving that metric due to all the pressures in the market/industry right now.

So far, we are pacing ahead of that, as the consumer has been very receptive to new retails in the market, and when the weather cooperates in the early season here, they are buying. We are seeing this in all regions and formats, so we feel good that our own internal consumer survey data and external sources telling us that consumers were going to stick with gardening in 2022 and do even more is playing out well.

But Mother Nature still rules. Last weekend was a “FULL STOP” moment in this momentum as she provided us the coldest temperatures and highest winds of the year (below 20F and 40 mph winds in many markets in the mid-Atlantic). This was a tough one, and both later and more intense for the South versus previous years. But the last two days have shown QUICK recovery by both the stores and consumers in getting right back into the season.

On the flip side, supply chain and logistics continue to be a strong headwind in the season. The consumer is there, in our opinion, for the third straight year, but we are getting materials/hard goods/etc. the week we need them rather than the normal four to six weeks before production, so that is hampering our ability to do the work efficiently and timely. We are still good, but way too much subbing, waiting and revising for our liking during the main production season.

Secondly, the cost of gas for consumers and the cost of trucking to get the product to the stores is higher than when we finalized our plan for 2022 last July. This is making it difficult to find drivers, and then difficult to manage financially as the planned cost of trucking is about 20% higher than original estimates, and it's hard to see the leveling-off period as we hit peak spring.

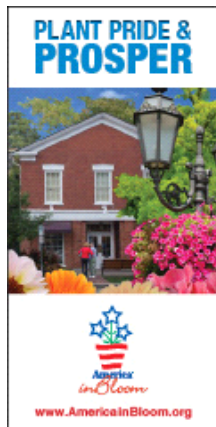
Thanks, Abe!

Like I said above, if you have your own season kickoff story, share it [HERE](#)!



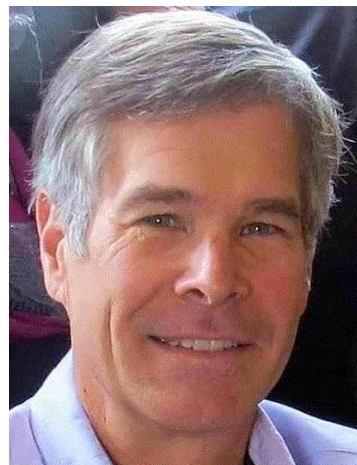
**In memoriam: Atlee Burpee**





W. Atlee Burpee IV passed away in his sleep unexpectedly at his home in Pennsylvania on Monday morning, February 21. He was 65.

You'll no doubt recognize his famous name, but you may not have known the gentleman himself. I didn't, even though I once worked for W. Atlee Burpee, the packet seed company (well, I should say that my company, Ball Publishing, was owned by Burpee, which is owned by George Ball, Jr., who currently serves as executive chairman). But the Burpee family had sold the business to General Foods long before then, in 1973, when Atlee was just 16, and by the time the Ball family acquired the company in 1991 he had already moved on to the commercial vegetable business.



Atlee was the great-grandson of the founder of the vegetable and flower seed giant, and was raised first on Warden Farm in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, and later in Santa Barbara, California. Having the seed business coursing through his veins, he graduated from the University of California-Davis in 1979 with a degree in agricultural economics and a specialization in horticulture, after which he did kick off his career at Burpee, at both their Warminster, Pennsylvania, HQ and Santa Paula, California, breeding station, specializing in vegetables.

In 1985, Atlee joined Abbott & Cobb as a territory sales manager, then went to Stokes Seeds in the same position for two years before joining Sakata Seed, where he's been serving as an area sales manager for the Mid-Atlantic region.

Justin Davis, Sakata's sales and marketing director, wrote, "Atlee was an exceptionally talented and knowledgeable seedsman who built his career on the principles of courtesy, respect and commitment ... his true passion and love in life was his family. He was endlessly proud of [them] and was always showing pictures to colleagues while beaming with joy."

Besides his passion for the seed industry, Atlee was a life member of the Plymouth Fire Company and active volunteer firefighter. His hobbies evolved from rock climbing to cycling. In recent years, his sporting passion switched to ultra-marathons of 50 and 100 miles. His capstone feat was completing 242 miles in a six-day race.

Atlee is survived by his wife of 35 years, Deborah (Stetser) Burpee, his son, Lee Burpee, daughter Lisa (and Scott) Rafter, daughter Michelle Burpee (and Vince Orsini); and his sisters Gaye Burpee, Jeannetta Burpee, Carol Burpee, Emilie Burpee Ryan and Phoebe Burpee McGaw; four grandchildren and a raft of nieces and nephews. He's remembered by his family as a kind, easy-going, good-humored and gentle man.

## Glenn Goldsmith memorial planned at CAST

Joel Goldsmith recently emailed me the details of a memorial service planned for his dad, Glenn, who passed away last December at the age of 93. Joel tells us it will be during CAST at Syngenta Flowers in Gilroy (the former Goldsmith Seeds location) on Sunday, April 3, from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Writes the family, "Please join the Goldsmith Family and friends as we remember and celebrate the tremendous life that Glenn lived. We are grateful to Syngenta for allowing us to use their beautiful grounds on the last afternoon of the California Spring Trials. This location is where Glenn felt most at home, breeding and showing new varieties of flowers."

[HERE](#) is a link with further information, as well as registration for the event.

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## Fire at Timbuk Farms

No word yet on what caused a big fire at **Timbuk Farms** in Granville, Ohio, on March 15, which took out most of their production building and about an acre of greenhouse. The two-alarm fire started around 2:00 a.m. (don't they all?) and nearly a dozen emergency agencies responding, said news reports. Thankfully, nobody was injured.



I reached out to owner Jim Gibson to see if he needed anything from his friends in the industry and his reply indicated that the industry wasn't waiting around to hear from me—they've already responded. Wrote Jim:

"Thank you, Chris, for reaching out. It's been amazing how much support and help we've gotten from the whole greenhouse community and the local community."

Jim provided details of the damage: three barns on the northeastern side of the complex, including a production barn, shipping barn, soil room and offices sustained massive damage, including collapsed roofs and walls. The fire also destroyed or damaged plastic pots and trays, production line equipment, pallets and bales of media.

Jim expressed his gratitude to the fire crews who responded to the blaze; to the electric, Internet and gas companies that will work to restore services to the business; and to members of the greenhouse industry that have reached out with their words of support.

"We have all intentions to rebuild and be back in business as soon as possible," he said.



## Bonnie unveils new Alabama greenhouse



**Bonnie Plants**, the largest grower of vegetable and herb plants for home gardens in the U.S., has just unveiled a \$15 million expansion and upgrade of its greenhouse and distribution facilities in Union Springs.

President and CEO Mike Sutterer told me via email, "This facility is the largest capital expansion project in Bonnie's 104-year history—and likely the most important to our current and future success."



According to Mike, the new facility was designed specifically for Bonnie's ecommerce business (which has grown 860% since 2019).

"The lines are increasingly blurring between in-store and online retail. Consumers expect and even demand a seamless shopping experience, whether in-store or online. We're leaning in heavily here and investing for growth.

"We've created a facility that allows us to produce, grow and ship any plant anywhere at any time of year, whether it's vegetables, flowers, succulents or houseplants. In addition, we've created a state-of-the-art Amazon-style warehouse that's extremely efficient for pick, pack and shipping plants so we can process large volumes of orders quickly. And with our innovative ecommerce shipping materials, our plants arrive fresh and in perfect condition just as if you'd come to the farm and picked it up yourself."

The expanded facilities include 7 acres of open-roof, natural-ventilation greenhouses plus 4 acres of outdoor growing area. They'll be served by a 7,800 sq. ft. production complex and a 46,000 sq. ft. distribution warehouse.

It was August of 2020 when I reported that Bonnie had broken ground on their new 17,000 sq. ft. HQ in Opelika, Alabama. Back then, Mike told me they'd be expanding in Union Springs, too, specifically for new categories like flowers, plus their expanding ecommerce business. He's a man of his word!

Bonnie currently operates 80 facilities in 43 states.

Check out this **VIDEO** from the show "Simply Southern" to learn more about their new HQ and greenhouses (the second half of the seven-minute video is about diseases and insects in the home garden).



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## Master Nursery recognizes top vendors

Member-owned cooperative [Master Nursery Garden Centers](#) (MNGC) recognized their top vendors at their recent annual owners' meeting in Sacramento, California. As the nation's largest independent buying group, MNGC has 140 vendors providing products and services to nearly 500 retail garden centers.

"This co-op is not possible without our members, vendors and staff," said CEO Jeff Lafferty. "We see our vendors as our partners in profitability and in the marketplace. At the end of every year, we evaluate our numbers and recognize the vendors that excelled."

Who came out on top among those 140 vendors?

Monrovia Growers—Vendor of the Year

Willoway Nurseries—Largest Sales Increase

Griffin Greenhouse Supplies, Inc.—Distributor of the Year

Coast of Maine Organic Products—Private Label Vendor of the Year

Everde Growers—Most Improved Vendor

In addition, EB Stone & Son, Inc. was recognized for being MNGC's first vendor partner, celebrating more than 65 years of service.



## New Fungicide, Postiva

There's been a lot of talk about Syngenta's broad-spectrum fungicide, Postiva, which is formulated with two powerful new active ingredients in a unique combination that covers FRAC codes 7 and 3. I caught up with Nancy Rechcigl from Syngenta to discuss Postiva in [THIS VIDEO](#).

In a recent *GrowerTalks* article about reducing disease risk, Nancy stated, "Postiva is a very convenient addition to any grower's program. It can be applied as a foliar spray or soil drench through various types of spray equipment commonly used for making ground and aerial treatments, including chemigation or through auto cold fogging systems. Plus, once applied, Postiva quickly moves from the leaf surface into the waxy layer, which creates a reliable, rain-fast barrier of protection."

It's registered for every state except Florida and California (Florida's registration is coming soon, California will be next year, Nancy says).

Watch the video to learn more. And go to [www.greencastonline.com](http://www.greencastonline.com) for more, as well.



## Finally ...



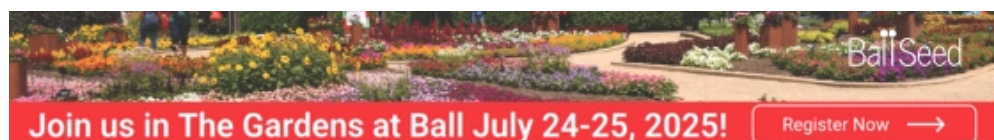
A shout-out to Baltimore florist Victoria Clausen, who—with the help of the floral industry—raised \$40,000 in just one weekend for her homeland of Ukraine. She and her team designed 560 blue-and-yellow bouquets to sell, with the proceeds going to provide Ukrainians with food and transportation to evacuate disabled children. I got the story and photo from the [Society of American Florists](#).

Victoria posted her campaign, #BlossomsForUkraine, on Instagram and it quickly caught the attention of consumers and the industry. The Floral Source and Mellano & Company donated several boxes of flowers to the cause, as did DV Flora. Virginia florist Rachel Gang of Helen Olivia Flowers learned of Victoria's efforts through an event planner and decided to join in, raising \$4,000 selling blue-and-yellow bouquets for \$100, \$200 and \$300.

Many of Victoria's family and friends live in the central Ukraine city of Dnipro and she gets daily, first-hand reports of the needs of refugees.

Said Victoria, "I'm sending it directly to people I trust with my life," she says. "It is being distributed where it is needed most and it is being put to use immediately."





Feel free to email me at [beytes@growertalks.com](mailto:beytes@growertalks.com) if you have ideas, comments or questions. Beefs, even ... especially if barbecued!

See you next time!

Chi

Chris Beytes

Editor

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