

More TPIE products, webinar alerts and a book deal



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2023

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Green Profit's
buzz!
Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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An Epic Acquisition
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Soils and Rail-Specific Planters

I'm starting today where I ended off last week: providing you with some award-winning products from the Tropical Plant International Expo held last month in sunny Tampa, Florida. According to my records I have three Cool Products left to reveal. Those are:

Screen Planters. If you have a screen room, you have a boring rail that traverses the view at about mid-height. Why not use that space to garden? Cristina Tortolini had a great idea to create an easy way to use that space for gardening and enhancing the beauty of that space. **The Screen Planter** comes in 2-, 4- and 6-ft. lengths, and custom sizes can be created as well. It's easy to install without tools: The key is the specially designed clips that help support and hold the planter to the railing. Planters are held secure to the clips with Velcro. Each planter has a drainage hole, so you can plant directly into the planter, or just pop some nursery pots in there for little to no effort. They also offer a corner unit to make use of a mostly unusable space. I just

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had a brilliant idea: Use the planters during the winter holidays to hold decorative balls and festive lights once the plants are out.



Sol Soils. I've mentioned the friend duo behind another TPIE exhibitor, Flourish Plant. Here's another friend duo creating a new product for houseplant fans. John Porter and Travis Thein were disappointed in the houseplant potting mixes available at the box stores and decided to create their own from USA-sourced all-natural and peat-free ingredients. The result is **Sol Soils**, a line of five different mixes for specific houseplant applications—cacti, orchids, houseplants, succulents and bonsai. All of these mixes are designed to be fast-draining to prevent root rot, which they tell us is the most frequent cause of death of houseplants. All of the elements in these mixes are also available in their own bags separately so plant parents can create their own custom formulations.




They didn't stop there, though. The pair also developed a line of soil toppers, or small decorative stones that you can lay on top of your houseplant's soil surface.

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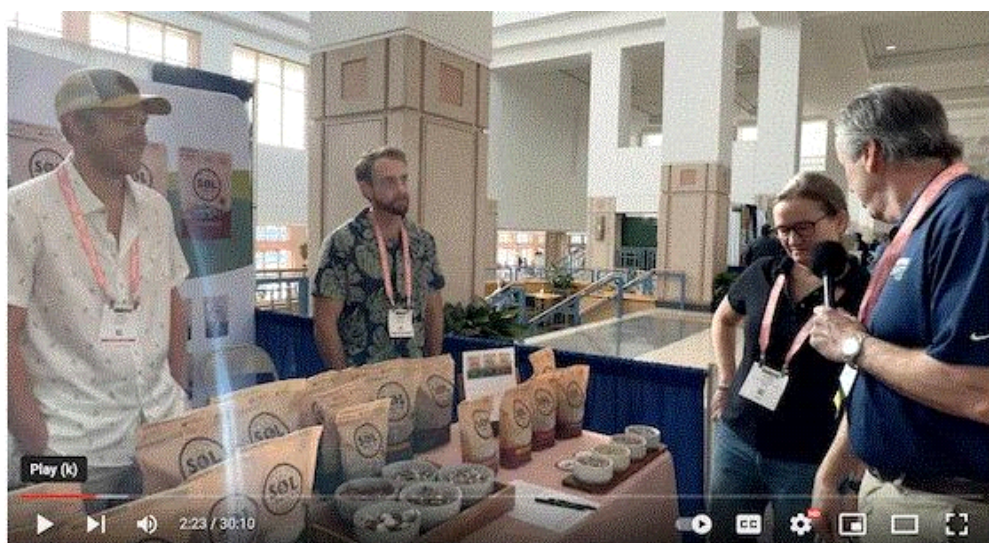


An EcoPot and a Video

United Nursery is in the business of growing high-quality tropicals, and has been doing so for years. With all that growing and selling experience under their belts they had hands-on understanding of a horticultural component that needed a serious overhaul: the decorative pot. Enter EcoPots, a line of pots produced from 80% post-consumer recycled plastics and 20% crushed natural stone materials. Made in Belgium, the pots are incredibly lightweight and super strong. They are so strong, in fact, that each pot comes with a 10-year guarantee against breakage. That longevity is also the reason behind the entire line being available only in the neutral colors of white, light and dark gray, terra cotta and black. Today's trendy colors likely won't be in fashion in 10 years, so why waste a long-lasting pot on short-term fashion? EcoPots are available in 3-in. up to 16-in. in several different shapes and available in custom sizes.



I have a few more items from TPIE that I will share in the future, but in the meantime you can watch the [VIDEO](#) of Chris Beytes and I as we stopped at each of the Cool Product-winning booths on our last day at TPIE.



Cool Products from TPIE 2023



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It's on the long-side, but it's informative.



Always Teaching

Speaking of houseplant-type products, I have a portion of Jen Polanz's most recent "On the Road" article segment that we could not shoehorn into the February issue of Green Profit. The

article features plant shop Grow Geneva in Illinois. Here's the text that could not run with the full article:

It's always fascinating to me to learn how people get into the horticulture business, and Laura Pettit had a unique pathway into plants.

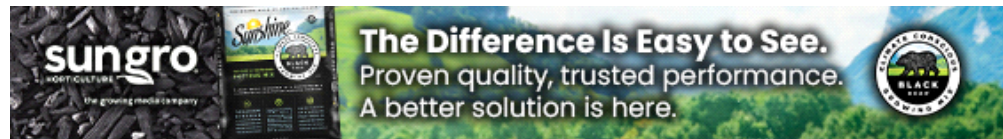
"My knowledge of plants came from being a teacher," she says. "I had a very plant-y classroom and that's what set us apart from other classes. It kinda got out of hand a little bit and the kids loved it."

"Out of hand" simply means there were plants everywhere in the first-grade classroom, including at the kids' tables, where they watered them, drew them, pruned them, measured them and even propagated them. Fun fact: Her classroom had one of the highest attendance rates in the building for five years in a row. Was it the plants? It's hard to say, but the district asked her to present to other local educators on "Wonder in the Classroom With Plants," so it must have been a factor.



You can take the teacher out of the classroom, but they don't ever stop being teachers (I should know, my mom is a retired teacher). Today, Laura hosts kids classes in the summer, as well as field trips for preschools that include learning about plants and, of course, a story read from a book purchased at a local bookshop. She also recently hosted the Geneva High School Houseplant Club so they could learn more about how to sell houseplants.

Read the rest of the article about Grow Geneva [HERE](#).



An Epic Acquisition

We got word a few weeks ago that Kevin Espiritu, the founder and CEO of Epic Gardening, has acquired seed company **Botanical Interests**. Long a staple rack in the garden center with its beautifully illustrated seed packets and impressive variety of seeds, Botanical Interests owners Curtis Jones and Judy Seaborn had been searching for a successor to steward the company into the quickly changing future. Kevin and Epic and their mission to teach the world to grow found themselves with a storied brand to lead forward.

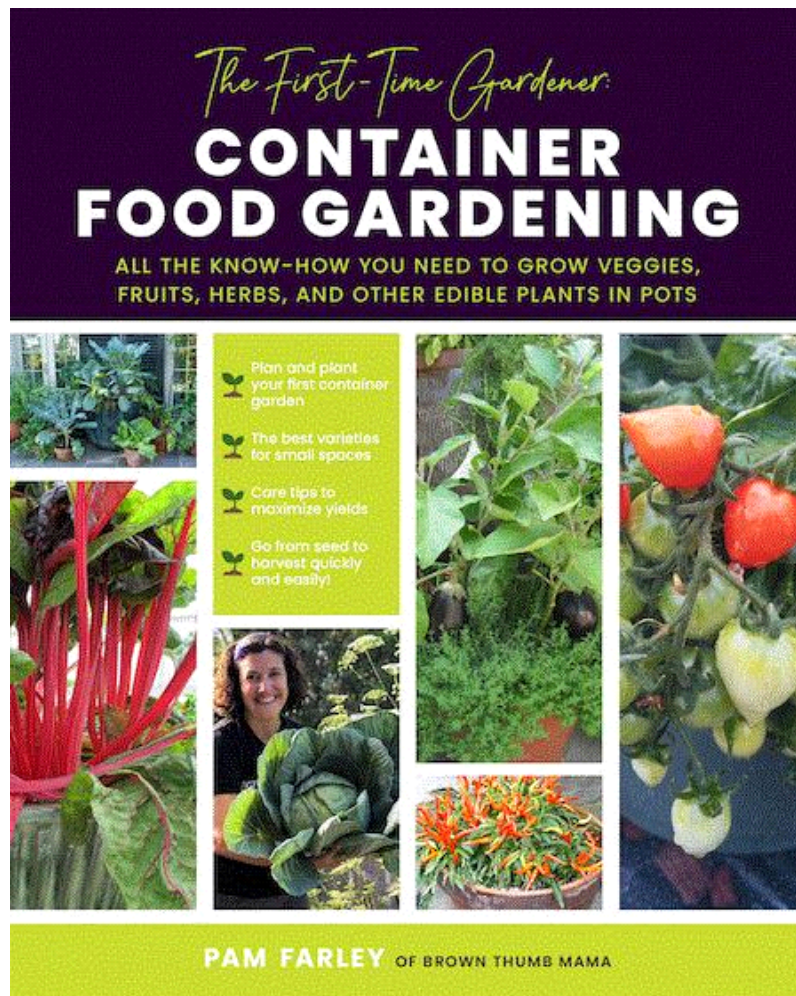
Who is this Kevin? He's a self-taught gardener who turned pro right before our eyes through various social media channels. His popularity on the socials have resulted in 6 million social media followers, 18 million podcast downloads and 50 million blog visits. He's also authored two books on gardening topics.

Botanical Interests will now offer Epic Gardening products in their online store. We will see what future opportunities arise with this acquisition but expect to find more Epic Gardening products sold via the Botanical Interests site.



A Book for Newbies

Maybe someone who reads "The First-Time Gardener: Container Food Gardening" will have an amateur-to-professional career path like Kevin Espiritu has. The new book by Pam Farley is a beginner's guide to growing edibles in containers wherever those containers may be—windowsill, balcony or a backyard bonanza of them.



Your newbie gardening customers have questions, and while you are an excellent source of how-to info, you can't guide them 24/7. This book can. The book covers container sizes, appropriate soil blends, where to locate containers, how to stake and prune, and when to fertilize and water.

"The First-Time Gardener: Container Food Gardening," available March 7, is part of a series geared toward beginners from Cool Springs Press. Other titles in the series include the topics of raised bed gardening, growing plants and flowers and growing vegetables. Interested in carrying "Container Food Gardening" and any of the other titles? Contact Monica Baggio at monica.baggio@quarto.com.

Bergers are the Tops

Valérie and Mélissa Berger, co-Presidents and CEOs of [Berger](#), have been chosen among the winners of the Palmarès de Entreprises au Féminin (top women-owned businesses in Quebec). This recognition, the fourth of its kind, aims to advance women entrepreneurs leading large companies and who contribute to the growth of the Quebec economy.



Valérie and Mélissa Berger

"It's a real privilege for us not only to manage an innovative company such as Berger, but also to be able to do it on a daily basis with motivated people who have the company's success at heart," said Mélissa Berger in a press release about the honor. "We want to be actively involved in the socio-economic development of the communities where we do business. We accept this distinction with great humility, especially since it coincides with Berger's 60th birthday."

Berger is a third-generation family business, which currently operates 11 peat bogs and nine factories in North America, employing more than 800 professionals located across Canada, the United States and Central America.

Speaking of North America

Enrollment for the 2023 America In Bloom program is open until February 28! AIB has helped towns and cities transform themselves through beautification efforts for more than 20 years. That beautification happens through the use of horticulture's inherently beautiful products. Yay for us!

AIB recently launched a new tiered participation system. Levels 1 and 2 provide opportunities for communities to conduct a self-evaluation of the strengths and opportunities for improvement, either working alone (Level 1) or with the aid of a trained AIB advisor (Level 2).

Level 3 participation, which is the level open for enrollment until the end of February, sends a pair of AIB advisors to visit the community and results in a comprehensive written report of how the community scores against a grid covering seven areas: community vitality, floral impact, landscaped areas, urban forestry, environmental initiatives, celebrating heritage and overall impression. This is the enrollment level that culminates in the annual Educational Symposium and Awards Program held each fall. This year's Symposium will be held September 28-30 in Spartanburg and Greenwood, South Carolina.

Nearly 300 communities of all sizes across the country are enjoying the benefits of beautification through AIB programs. [Click here to register at the AIB website.](#)

A Grower-Related Webinar Alert!

There is a sequel to the best-named webinar ever: Do or Dianthus Part 2: Being Successful from Rooting to Finishing. In this second part of the dianthus series, Gary Vollmer will cover all the production details you need to produce a top-notch dianthus crop through all of the stages—even shipping. Specifics include:

- **Scheduling**—How to time your production across the different types of dianthus, growing region, growing structures and temperature
- **Propagation**—Learn the full protocols from receiving the cuttings through to finishing the liners, including mist management, PGRs and more
- **Finishing**—Pinching, nutrition, temperature, lighting, and insect and disease management across different growing systems

Do or Dianthus Part 2, sponsored by the kind and knowledgeable folks at Selecta One, takes place on Thursday, April 6, at 1 p.m. Eastern (Noon Central). [Click here to register for it.](#) You can also find the archived version of Part 1 (How to Pick the Right Variety and Schedule Your Best Dianthus Crop) at that same link. Catch up!

A Retail-Related Webinar Alert!

While you are on the Ball Publishing Upcoming Webinars page, you'll see we also have a retailer-related webinar coming up on March 2 titled "Top New Perennials for 2023 Retail & a 2024 Preview from Proven Winners and Walters Gardens." Walters' Regional Product Manager Laura Robles will pick 15 of the most popular new perennials for the '23 retail season and review their growing tips and talking points. She'll also share 15 more to keep your eye out for as you peruse trials and trade shows this summer.

Sponsored by Walters Gardens and Proven Winners, this webinar will take place on Thursday, March 2, at 1 p.m. Eastern (Noon Central). [Click here to register.](#)

An SMS Webinar Alert!

Your friend and mine, *Green Profit* contributor and CEO of Garden of Words Katie Elzer-Peters is the most hawkish person I know when it comes to adopting SMS programs for horticultural businesses. She has very good reasons for why your garden center (or any other business you may have) should be on the SMS train, and she has a two-webinar series in conjunction with the Proven Winners IGC Webinar Series in which she outlines her reasonings and the steps you should take.

Part 1: Get Started with SMS: The Low Input-High Reward Marketing Solution for Spring has already taken place, but you can watch the entire webinar [HERE](#).

Part 2: SMS Supercharge for IGCs shows you how to take your current SMS program to the next level with SMS-specific features to grow your list, segment the list to offer relevant information, allow customers to set preferences and how to use transactional SMS messages to support in-store events. This webinar takes place Thursday, February 23, at 2 p.m. Eastern (1 p.m. Central). Register for Part 2 [HERE](#).

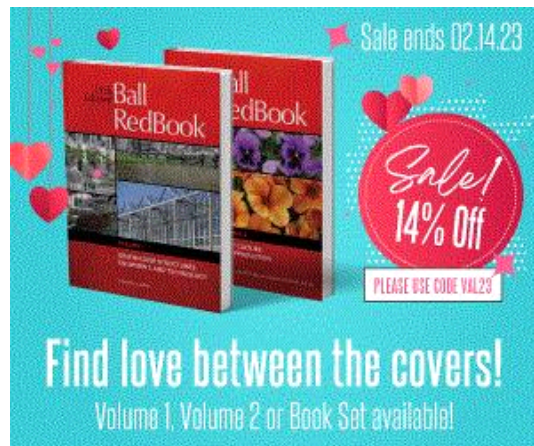
AFE Scholarship Deadline

Are you or someone you know enrolled in a college or university floral design certificate or degree program? And are you looking for funds? (I know, that was a silly question.) Then you could be eligible for the [James and Helen Phillip Floral Design Scholarship Fund](#) through the American Floral Endowment. Established to honor James and Helen by their daughter Lee Phillip Bell, the program provides funding through block grants to institutions to distribute to floral design students. The intent behind these scholarships is to make sure retail floral shops have qualified and trained employees to fill their positions.

Act quick, though! Your application for the James and Helen Phillip Floral Design Scholarship is due by March 1. For more information and to apply, click [HERE](#).

Find Love Between the Covers

Get your mind out of the gutter. I meant you should find love between the covers of the 19th Edition *Ball RedBook*.



Buy your beloved grower (maybe that's yourself) a *Ball RedBook* at our special Valentine's Day discount of 14% off the regular price by February 14. The discount applies to Vol. 1, Vol. 2, the two-book set and also to the *Ball Culture Guide*, which, by the way, was mentioned in *The New York Times* recently as "a favorite resource" of Drew Schuyler, the assistant head gardener at Untermyer Gardens Conservancy in Yonkers, New York. High praise!

When do we ever discount anything at the Ball Book Shelf? Don't let this offer pass you by. [Click here to visit the Ball Bookshelf](#) by midnight February 14 and use the promo code VAL23 at checkout. Read it from cover to cover and you just might fall in love with all the crops.

Say It With ... Onions?

Considering Valentine's Day is next week, I thought I'd share one of the most "Hmm, that's an interesting display of love" stories I've heard in a while. A bride in the Philippines recently walked

down the aisle carrying a **bouquet of onions**. And so did her five-person bridal party.



The price of onions in this Southeast Asian nation has become crazy expensive—457% above the global average!—due to unfortunate weather and supply issues. This low supply makes the humble onion a high-priced luxury. And don't we want to experience the sweet (oniony) taste of luxury on our special day?

Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

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

Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

This week's BuZZ! was sent to 24,661 loyal readers!

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