Plants from Cultivate; Jim Nau Memories; Educating Educators



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GrowerTalks' Acres Online

News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Ten Plants from Cultivate
Jim Nau stories
Plantpeddler educating educators
Finally ...



This IS the plant business, after all





I tend to focus on new plant varieties during Spring Trials in April (and poinsettias in late November, when I'm at the Heimos trial). But that's just dumb of me! There are new varieties to be discovered every month of the year, if I'd just look.

Or, better yet, if other folks do the looking and then tell me about it.



The New Varieties display at Cultivate was massive and chock-full of good stuff!

Such was the case at Cultivate'23 and The Garden Center Group's Retailers' Choice Awards,

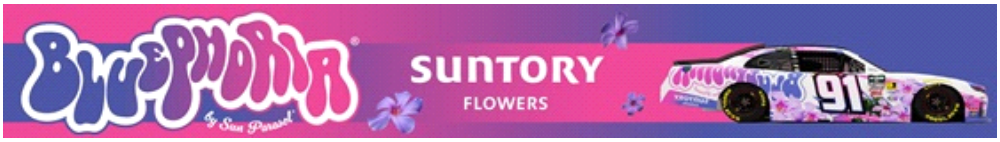







wherein a batch of retail experts patrolled the trade show floor looking for great things to sell. The experts selected a total of 70 items, which they whittled down to 15 award-winners. Of those, 11 (73%) were plants? Why that number? Well, GCG Managing Director Danny Summers told me that the best practices of the members of GCG indicate that you make the most profit selling at least 70% plants. The rest of your sales should come from items that support your sale of plants. So I'm guessing that's why the winners' list is plant-heavy.

This issue of *Acres Online* is dedicated to new varieties from Cultivate'23. Many are Retailers' Choice winners (which I've indicated with RC). The rest I found for myself. I could give you several dozen, but I've settled on 10 to match the 10 hardgoods from last time.

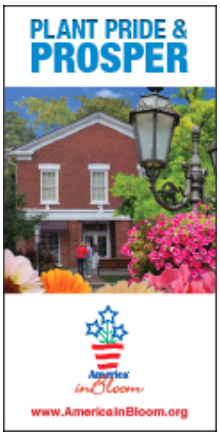


Emerald Coast Growers' non-invasive grasses

A key message from this Florida Panhandle-based grower is that they're working with the University of Georgia on sterile pennisetum and North Carolina State University on sterile miscanthus. They've got five of each now in their catalog, including Miscanthus Bandwidth and High Frequency, and Pennisetum Praline, Jambalaya and Etouffe (pictured with Katy Fernas), with more on the way.



Sterility in grasses may not be important where you garden (yet), but it's a big deal in some eastern states where both genera are on invasive species lists. And it's a benefit overall: they're vigorous; have an earlier, longer bloom period; and nicer flower plumes. ecgrowers.com





Dewar Nurseries finished fruit program (RC)

It was easy to see why the retailers gravitated towards this program: three levels of tagging/branding on every pot! Apopka-based Dewar has a printed pot, an informational picture tag and a big picture of the fruit you're buying.



They've got raspberries, blueberries, bananas, grapes, papaya, guava, soursop, figs, tea plants … I'm getting hungry just looking at the photos I took! dewar.com



Bloomin’ Easy Cherry Go Round Hydrangea (RC)

A rich red reblooming hydrangea from the Bloomin’ Easy program by Van Belle Nursery of British Columbia, Canada. Flowers turn even darker red, almost black, as they age. Foliage and flowers are thick and leathery, giving them good weather (and even some sun) tolerance.



A sister variety not called out by the Retailers' Choice judges is Grin & Tonic Hydrangea with white and green blooms (and a clever name). bloomineasywholesale.com

Bailey Nurseries Eclipse Bigleaf Hydrangea (RC)

This reblooming hydrangea from the First Editions collection is the first *H. macrophylla* with dark purple foliage that holds its dark color all season long, even in warm climates or when cut back.



Flowers are cranberry red with chartreuse centers, providing a bright contrast against the deep purple foliage. baileynurseries.com



Biostok Gen Z Plants houseplant assortments (RC)

It doesn't have to be new to be new, if you know what I mean. Apopka propagator Biostok Foliage has packed their 2-in. houseplants into three Gen Z-friendly assortments, from easy to collectible.



“Beleaf” are basic varieties that every plant parent can start out with confidence of success (price about $2). Want something a bit more exciting? Choose from the “Becool” collection ($5). Then, when you’re ready to get daring, something from the “Bebold” collection is sure to excite ($10 to $20). All are packed 40 per case. “Why settle for a full-grown plant when you can watch it grow from a baby?” they ask. biostok.com



Terra Nova’s newest heuchera

Terra Nova Nurseries caught the eyes of passersby with a beautiful rainbow sweep of their heuchera, from dark purple to rich green and everything in between. They introduced two additional heuchera, including Peach Smoothie, with deep peachy-orange foliage (Berry Smoothie is one of their top-sellers).





But I really dig Changeling (above), which gives you several colors on one plant. It starts out red, morphs to rust, then turns light green and ages to dark green. If you can't decide which color to buy, just buy Changeling and you get them all! terranovanurseries.com



Casa Flora Aubergine Lady fern

It's been a while since Texas-based fern specialist Casa Flora has introduced a new variety, but the wait was worth it. Aubergine Lady has fronds that start out green, but age to dark eggplant

purple. From their own breeding program, they've been working on this one for years, said president Richard Lim, who was beamingly proud.



Aubergine Lady will thrive in Zones 4 to 10 (10 if shady and well-watered).
casaflora.com/products/ferns



Deroose Message Prints (RC)

Here's an impulse purchase for your cash wrap: message-printed *Hoya carii* (heart leaf hoya).

You can get stock messages or have them customized. Wholesale cost is just $2.90, including the pot.



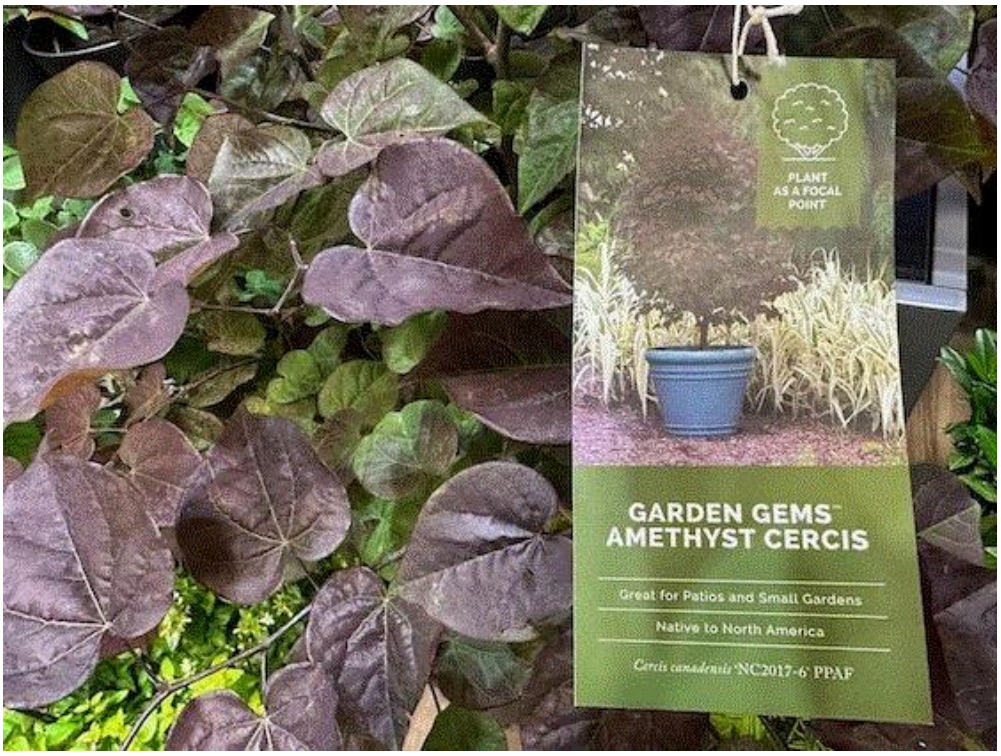


Likewise, *Pilea peperomioides* “Smiley Face Plants,” which are just $2.55 each. derooseplants.com/en/home

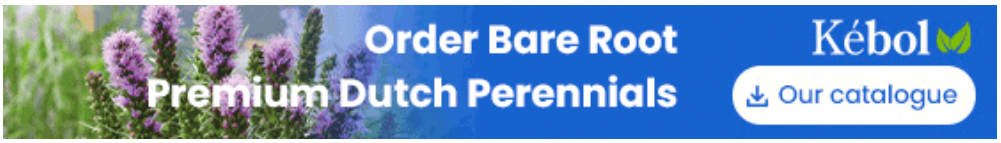


Star Roses & Plants Garden Gem Amethyst Redbud (RC)

Star earned one of four Retailer Choice Awards for the Ball corporation (Darwin got two and Burpee got one). Those varieties I covered during CAST, but Stars’ new redbuds I haven't seen until now. Garden Gems are compact, growing to just 8 to 10 ft. when mature. They’re hardy in Zones 5 to 9. Amethyst has deep purple heart-shaped leaves.



There's an equally attractive sister variety, Emerald Cercis, being released for 2024.
starrosesandplants.com



Flower Carpet Fragrant Shrub Roses; Flower Carpet Peach

From Anthony Tesselaar comes a new line of Flower Carpet Roses, this time in Fragrant Shrub Rose form. Large-bloomed and sweet-smelling, these are said to offer an old-world look, but with all the benefits of modern durability and disease-resistance. The line starts with five colors: Blush, Berry, Champagne, Lipstick and Orange. Great in containers or the landscape, and hardy in Zones 5 to 10.


NEW
NEW
THE ENVIRONMENTAL ROSE
Shrub Rose
Flower Carpet
NATURALLY FLOWERS LONGER
SHRUB ROSES
Highly Fragrant
Large Blooms
Lush Foliage
tesselaar.com



Also, the venerable Flower Carpet series gets a new color, Peach. tesselaar.com/plants/flower-carpet-shrub-roses



Jim Nau stories

The news of the untimely passing of Jim Nau, former head of the gardens and trials at Ball, hit some folks hard, and they wanted to share their fond memories of their time with him with others. Here are a few:

“I left Ball Seed and struck out for Alaska in 2014, but I think of Jim every time I open the *Ball Culture Guide*. I supervise the Grounds and Horticulture team at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and that water-stained, dog-eared, dusty encyclopedia is essential to our annual production program. Most importantly, though? Jim was kind. I was fresh out of college when I met him and I won’t forget how welcome he made me feel.”—*Kara Monroe, Landscape and Grounds Supervisor, University of Alaska Anchorage*

“I have known Jim since I was 25 years old [in 1985], working back then as the Plant Department Manager for Ball Superior in Canada. As soon as I met Jim for the first time, we became great friends. When I was going to the Ball meetings, we would always find a moment to go shopping together in Chicago. Jim would make me discover new stores each time; as such, I contributed quite a bit to the Illinois economy.

“Later, when I worked for the Quebec Institute for the Development of Ornamental Horticulture, he always agreed to give presentations on different topics at the growers' seminars that we organized. He always said yes! I tried to give back a bit by bringing him to nice restaurants or doing a bit of shopping with him when he was in Montreal. We kept in touch for many years. I would see him at Cultivate and some other shows. Regrettably, I lost touch when he retired. It’s strange—I thought about him several times last week, hoping to see him again soon!

“He was such a very generous, knowledgeable, interesting and fine person, but above all, so humble. He gave a lot to the North American growers' community and to Ball. He will always have a very special place in my heart.”—*Luce Daigneault, Directrice Générale, Québec Vert*

“I used to be able to visit the Ball gardens every year and looked very much forward to spending time with Jim. He was extremely knowledgeable and passionate about horticulture in general and was always ready to share his encyclopedic knowledge and enthusiasm about seed history and varieties. Whenever I had a tough question, I knew I could go to Jim for a good, careful and reliable answer, and enjoyable, educational and fun conversation. Most of all, Jim was a kind and generous person. It was very sad to hear of his passing at such an early age. I know everyone in the horticultural world will miss him.”—*Renee Shepherd, Renee’s Garden*

“My favorite story about Jim is whenever he would come up with a new topic for a lecture/presentation (especially for presenting at the Chalet Education Center), he would call me up with the title and explain the details. He would always ask, ‘What do you think? Do you think it will work?’ in his excited voice.

“This was a man that could teach graduate-level courses in horticulture, concerned about whether a title would work. Every idea he came up with over the 25 years that I worked with him knocked my socks off! He was always so humble. His incredible knowledge was always balanced with genuine humor. (And he loved Japanese food, so whenever he spoke at Chalet, we ate at the wonderful Japanese restaurant across the street.)

“I missed him when he moved back to Iowa, but I will REALLY miss him now because I know he cannot come back to visit. Rest in peace, my good friend!”—*Jennifer Brennan, Chalet*

“I do not have a story, per se, about Jim but always admired him and held him in high esteem. He was always a wealth of so much knowledge; I learned something each time I encountered him. He always greeted me as a forever friend and made me feel comfortable, even though I felt so ignorant around him. I was sad when he retired and am even more saddened by his passing. May he live forever in the hearts of all of us who have had the privilege to have known him, in any small way.”—*Lori Harms, former owner of Countryside Flower Shop, Nursery & Garden Center*

“I’m shocked and saddened to hear of Jim Nau’s passing. When I met him many years ago, he and I soon realized that we spoke the same language, that of old-time seedsmen who strove to know the majority of ornamental seed varieties on the market and the details (some would say minutiae) that distinguished one from another. Jim was also the only other person I knew who avidly collected antique seed catalogs and recognized the horticultural history they contained.

“From your tribute article, I read that he spent much of his retirement gardening, just as I have to date. I regret that I never contacted him to compare gardening efforts and variety details, and had, in fact, assumed that he was still living in the Chicago area. Hopefully, in the near future *GrowerTalks* will feature a more extensive biographical sketch of Jim Nau, a true seedsman and industry icon.”—*Gerry Ziegler, Michell’s (retired)*

“Thank you for sharing so much of Jim’s biography. He was so accomplished, and remained one of the most unfailingly genteel people I’ve known in my career. This is a sad loss.

“He always told me that he loved my description of our time together in ISU hort and botany classes: ‘Jim, President of the undergraduate horticulture students club (the “CoHorts”) sitting ramrod straight in the front row and raising his hand to (correctly) answer every question, and me, slouched in the back row with a red pen, annoyedly correcting errors I found in the Iowa State Daily.’ “No wonder he walked directly from our graduation ceremony into Ball’s front door, while I ... did not.”—*Judy Laushman, Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers*

“I’ll miss Jim. I cut my teeth as an undergraduate student, grower and graduate student on the 17th and 18th editions of the *RedBook* (thanks to you too, Chris!). When I first met Jim after I started at ISU, I had a bit of a fan-boy moment and ran to get my *RedBook* to ask for his signature, if he’d oblige. He looked at me with a blank stare and a bit of disbelief and said, “You’re kidding, right?” I assured him it was no joke. Those pages were an integral part of introducing me to the wild, wonderful greenhouse world I now call home. Now that book sits alongside my copy of *Floriculture* (signed by Drs. Harold Wilkins and John Dole) on one side, and the entire set of *RedBooks* (save for the 5th edition) Jim graciously donated on the other. I look forward to someday passing them on to someone in the next generation who will serve—like Jim—as a steward of and shepherd for our community’s collective knowledge.”—*Christopher Currey, Associate Professor, Iowa State University*

Plantpeddler educating our greenhouse educators

As we discuss labor issues and how to get more kids interested in horticulture, Plantpeddler of Cresco, Iowa, is doing something unusual about the problem: They’re “educating the educators”—providing a free one-day workshop to agricultural greenhouse educators from states across the Midwest. The idea is to help equip high school and vocational instructors who may not know how to best utilize their educational greenhouses. It’s being presented in conjuction with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Iowa State University Ag Extension and Horticulture Departments. The event is Thursday, August 3, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m..

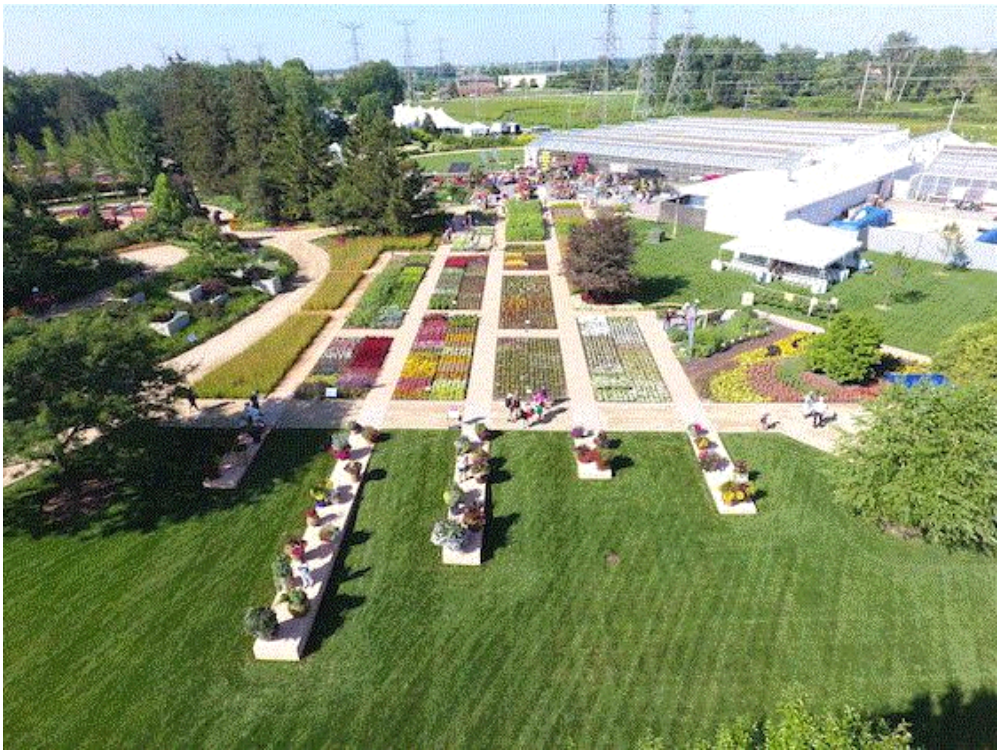
What a great idea!

Educators will learn about setting goals for their greenhouse program, crop timelines, greenhouse supplies, what to grow, basics of crop production, IPM and more.

I like the footnote in the announcement: “This event is payback for Plantpeddler. Back a few decades ago, Crestwood High School FFA Advisor Glen Dillon convinced student Mike Gooder to help manage the school’s greenhouse. That introduction to horticulture lit the fire, and was the stimulus to create Plantpeddler, which has become internationally known and a leading producer of young plants and finished products.”

I’d be remiss to not mention Plantpeddler’s Annual Trial Gardens & Variety Day, which is this Friday, August 4, the day after the Educate the Educators’ day. Hopefully, many of the instructors will stick around for that!

Finally …



As I type this, I’m still glowing from two days in The Gardens at Ball where we’ve been enjoying the annual Ball Seed Customer Day(s). Glowing because it was about 95F out there! Whew! But still, growers and retailers are not wimps, and we heard about 800 people showed up each day—a modern-era record, I think, for the company (Anna Ball told me that back in the early years, when folks arrived in Studebakers and wore fedoras and dresses, they’d get 3,000 or 4,000 visitors).

As always, we’ve shot a video tour of the festivities to give you a taste of what you missed. You can view that HERE.

Feel free to email me at beytes@growertalks.com if you have ideas, comments or questions.

See you next time,



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