

Firefly Sales; Spring Thus Far; Roots & Retail; Where's Chris?



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FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2024

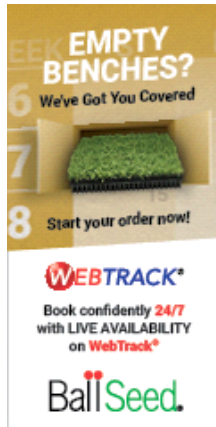
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News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- How is Firefly selling?
- Marvin on the Census
- Spring Thus Far
- Buel new Stuppy exec
- Four learnin' opportunities
- Finally ...




NEW FOR 2027




How's Firefly selling?

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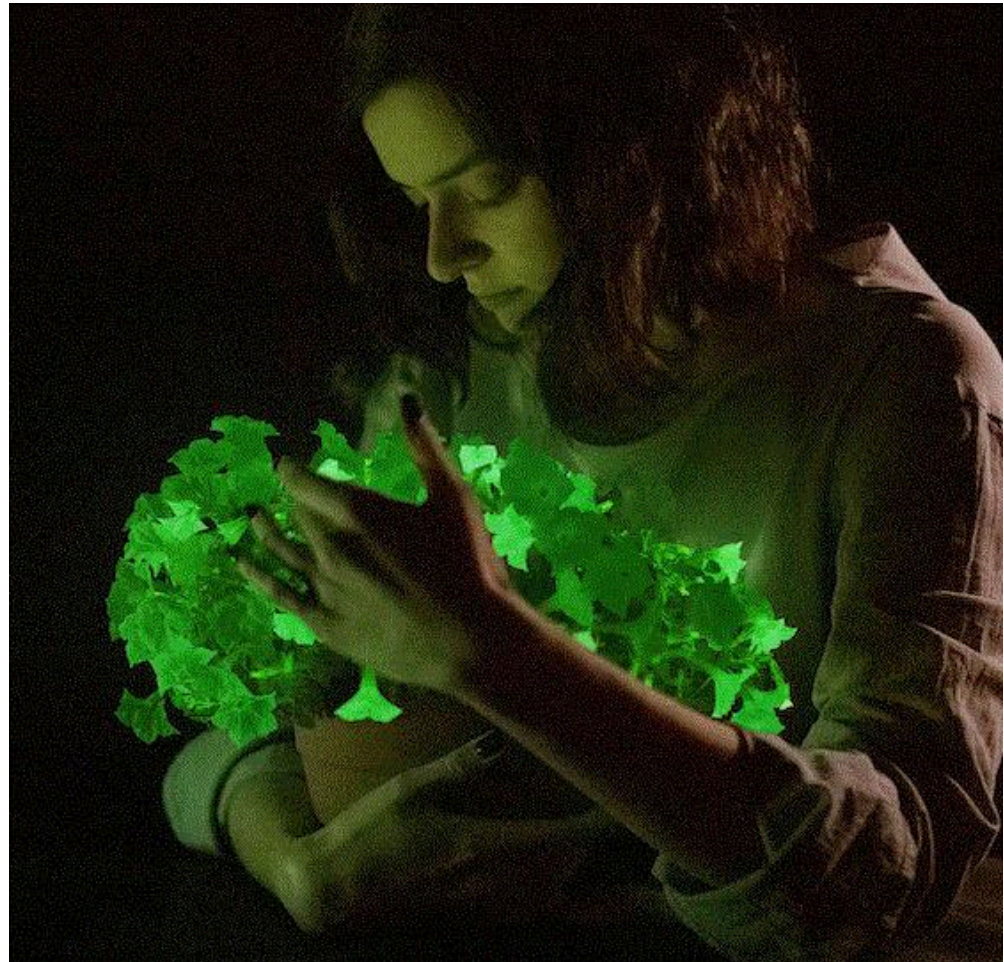
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a.m.a.
 HORTICULTURE

Rarely do you express interest in a crop like you did for the glow-in-the-dark Firefly Petunia from [Light Bio](#). Knowing they only had 50,000 pots of the unique petunia to sell, I emailed company CEO Keith Wood for an update on how the plant is moving after my publicity and that of other media outlets. Replied Keith:

We had a good spike in sales following favorable press in the tech and horticultural media (we are grateful for your help in this). We did not do as well in the mainstream media, but we're still working on this. I've listed below much of the coverage we received from the English-language sites (still many more in foreign languages).



We've sold most of the initial 50K plants and have boosted production to 70K. We don't have enough plants this year to support other distribution channels, but we plan to pursue this for next year. We would really like to be in the European markets, but their regulatory requirements for GM plants make this difficult.


His comment about the European markets stems from me telling him I had an inquiry from a friend who runs a big Swiss garden center. I assumed government regulations in the EU would be an uphill battle and one to be taken on by European plant distributors who know how to navigate those waters ... if getting a genetically engineered plant into Europe is even possible.

I know some of you have ordered plants; be sure to keep us posted on how they grow and how they glow ... in other words, we want a glowing report!

BTW, media outlets that have covered Firefly (besides this one) include *Scientific American*, *Nature*, *AgFunder News*, *MIT Technology Review*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Yahoo News*, and the [Daily Mail](#).

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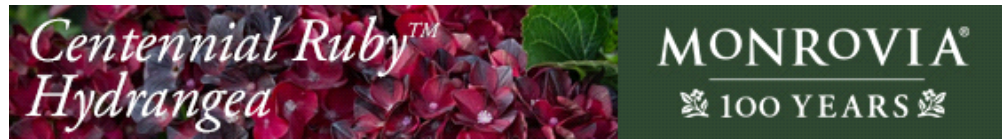
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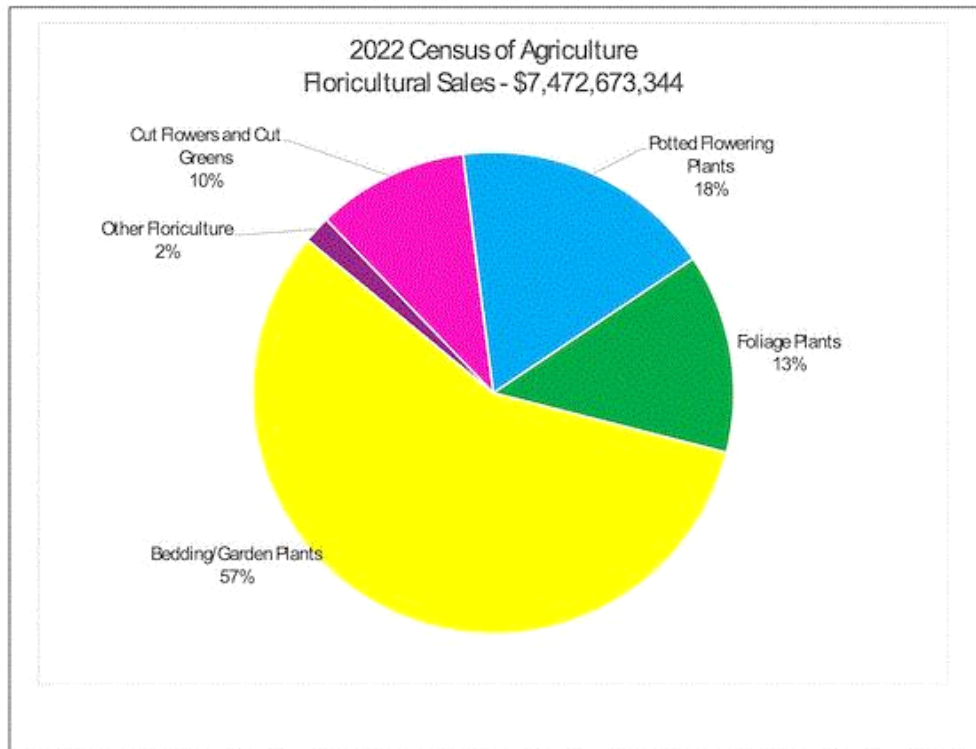
The Hortistician highlights the Census of Ag

More data, which means Marvin is like a kid in a candy shop once again! A few weeks ago, it was the 2022 Floriculture Crops Summary; this time it's the 2022 Census of Agriculture, just released by the USDA. This data set only comes out every five years. Here's his summary:

The 2022 Census of Agriculture statistics have been released by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. This once-every-five-years survey of all of U.S. agriculture provides a quick look at our floriculture industry. All agricultural producers with at least \$1,000 in agricultural sales are surveyed, and if even \$1 of their total sales are floriculture, then those dollars are captured in the Census data under floriculture. As such, we expect the sales to be higher than those recently reported from the 2022 Floriculture Crops Summary.

Total floriculture sales were reported as \$7.473 billion in 2022 according to the Census, which contrasts to the \$6.685 billion total in the Floriculture Crops Summary for the same year, 2022. The largest share of the Census pie goes to bedding/garden plants, which were \$4.259 billion, or 57.0% of the floriculture total sales. Potted flowering plants accounted for 17.6% of the total sales (\$1.316 billion), followed by foliage plants with 13.4% of the total sales (\$999.8 million).

In the Census, cut flowers and cut greens are grouped; together these accounted for 10.2 % of the pie and \$763 million. Finally, there's an "Other Floriculture" category, which accounted for \$135.4 million and 1.8% of the total pie.



The approximately \$788 million added dollars is the result of several differences in the methodology between the two surveys. In the Floriculture Crops Summary, the threshold for participation is \$10,000, but we know about the specific products that were produced only for

firms with at least \$100,000 in sales. And in this survey, USDA records the number of producers participating in each segment and for each crop.

In contrast, as noted above for the Census of Agriculture, a firm gets counted with \$1,000 or more in total agricultural sales, and a firm gets counted as a floricultural producer if they record even \$1 in floricultural sales. Furthermore, a firm gets counted by segment (cuts, pots, foliage or bedding producer) depending upon where the majority of their floricultural sales occur. And if a firm produces in multiple segments, and no one segment accounts for at least 50% plus \$1 of sales, then that firm is classified as an "Other Floricultural" producer. Due to these methodological differences, we do see more firm numbers for every segment in the Census of Agriculture and we see more sales recorded.

Segment	2022			
	Floriculture Crops Summary		Census of Agriculture	
	# firms	Sales (\$1,000s)	# firms	Sales (\$1,000s)
Cut Flowers	401	333,084	n.a.	n.a.
Cut Cultivated Greens	147	101,324	n.a.	n.a.
Cut Flowers and Greens	n.a.	434,408	10,805	762,984
Potted Flowering Plants	1,530	1,113,314	6,733	1,315,636
Foliage Plants	1,113	826,252	4,314	999,809
Bedding/Garden Plants	2,461 –annuals 2,089 - perennials (likely duplication of some firm numbers)	3,560,001	17,911	4,258,827
Other Floriculture			1,784	135,418
TOTALS	8,951	6,685,079	30,635	7,472,673

Comparing the two surveys as best as possible, we see that the Census recorded \$787,594,344 more dollars, or about 11.8% more total sales than the Floriculture Crops Summary. However, the Census reported 23.6% more dollars by the four industry segments than the Floriculture Crops reported in the cut flower, cut greens, potted flowering plants, foliage plant and bedding/garden plant segments. (Remember, the smaller growers contribute estimated sales totals of about \$237 million to the Floriculture Crops sales total, but these sales aren't identified by industry segment. In addition, the Floriculture Crops Summary includes over \$514 million in plant propagative materials sales.) There were 21,684 more firms contributing to the Census sales numbers.

By segment, there were 75.6% more sales of cut flowers and cut greens reported in the Census, with perhaps nearly 20 times the producers reporting. There were 18.2% more sales of potted flowering plants, with 5,203 more firms reporting in the Census. There were 21.0% more foliage dollars with 3,201 more operations reporting in the Census. And the Census reported 19.6% more sales dollars in the bedding/garden plant segment with at least 13,361 more firms contributing to the sales totals.

In summary, the bedding/garden plant, foliage plant and potted blooming plant segments, in total, saw 19.5% more sales in the 2022 Census than in the 2022 Floriculture Crops Summary, suggesting that the Floriculture Crops Summary does indeed capture about 80% of the larger industry segments' sales. However, for the cut flowers and cut greens segment, which saw 75.6% more dollars in the Census, there's both a tremendous underrepresentation of this segment's sales in the annual Floriculture Crops Summary and a testament to the large number of small cut flower producers contributing to the U.S. cut flower supply.

Thanks, Marvin! Questions for our resident horticulturist? You can email him at mmiller@ballhort.com.



Spring thus far

Last time, I mentioned that I'll be launching our annual Spring Weekend Sales Survey right around April 1, but I added that many of you are already enjoying spring (as a Florida resident once again, I'm reminded of that every day!). Also, winter has been mild to non-existent for some parts of the otherwise-cold country, so I asked what you've been experiencing thus far and if you think it bodes well (or not) for the real spring. Here are some comments:

Kansas. "Spring started for us last week and so far we are running a little ahead of last year. With the 10-day forecast only showing two nights below freezing and most of the upcoming days in the upper 60s to 70s, it looks like spring is coming early. We will be completely full wall-to-wall in a couple of days, so an early spring is always greatly appreciated. Vegetable sales have started off really strong."—*Kathy Miller, Sedan Floral*

Montana. "Folks show up when it's sunny; good turnouts for fairy garden and bonsai workshops this past weekend. In February, there was a great turnout for the orchid show by the local orchid society. Weather a little weird—very low on snow pack, alternating mild temps with extreme cold snaps. This weekend is forecasted to be sunny and 60! Just getting perennial benches and the nursery yard set up. FYI, we decided to close two days a week January to February. Just now back to seven days a week. The two days were Tuesday/Wednesday. No decision yet on whether that was a good plan or not."—*Jeri Zirbel, Caras Nursery & Landscape*

Minnesota. "Weather is a 10. Record-high temperatures are making people lose their minds (70F two days in a row, full sun most other days with lows in the high 20s). Typically, pansies ship out the first week of April, sometimes the last week of March. This year, our first deliveries will be going out this Friday, March 15. Our only fear is that if this weather continues, people will want spring product three or four weeks earlier than usual, and quite frankly, it will not be big enough by then. Time will tell."—*Jay Holasek, Fred Holasek and Son Greenhouse*

Minnesota. "Such a spring to be in Minnesota. Today is a balmy 72F, which is currently the same temperature as Orlando. Long-term forecasts for our customer regions in the Upper-Midwest and Northeast are all predicted to be warmer than normal. Our bareroot plants will start shipping next week, which is several weeks ahead of our regular schedule. Sales are also ahead of normal—which, of course, is not surprising. Now, if we can just get some rain!"—*Bill Carter, Prairie Moon Nursery*

Ontario, Canada. "Spring is still very far off."—*MaryAnn Vandermeer, Vandermeer Nursery*

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IN DEMAND
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IN TOUCH

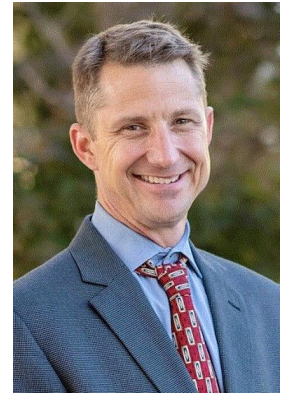
The indoor foliage assortment for growers,
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Tabb Buel named new Stuppy exec

Congrats to Tabb Buel, the new VP of Operations for Stuppy Greenhouse, Inc. based in North Kansas City, Missouri.

What kind of guy gets hired for that job? Tabb has an interesting background: He's a mechanical engineer, he's a project manager and he holds an Executive MBA from the Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. Prior to joining Stuppy, Tabb was VP of Operations at Sysco, the wholesale restaurant food distributor. He's also led business operations for several other well-established companies, including Vista Outdoor Inc., Garmin and Black & Veatch Corporation.

Congrats, Tabb, and welcome to the horticulture world—you'll love the people and the products!



Educational opportunities

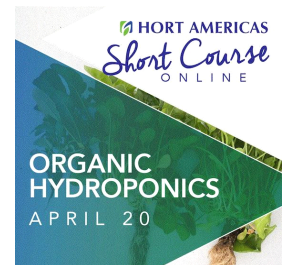
You guys and gals are smart (I know, because you're reading *Acres Online*), but you can always get just a little bit smarter. Here are two opportunities for you—or your employees because as a wise man once joked, "What if I train my employees and they leave? What if you don't train them and they stay?"

Hort Americas short course on Organic Hydroponics

Saturday, April 20

For just \$50 and two hours on Zoom, you can learn all the important aspects of growing organically in a hydroponic system. The instructor is Karla Garcia, CEO of Microgreens FLN and Hort Americas Technical Service. Karla has an MS in Plant Science from the University of Arizona.

Sign up [HERE](#).



UF's Online Training Program has three new courses

A staple of the online grower training community, the University of Florida is offering eight different classes this year, including three new ones, thanks to a generous gift by Ken and Deena Altman of Altman Plants, and an education grant from the American Floral Endowment.

The first of eight courses for the year, Greenhouse 101, starts on June 3.

Here's the schedule (by the way, all are available in English and Spanish):

Online course schedule for 2024:

Course	Dates	Level*	Cost
Greenhouse 101	Jun 3 to Jun 28	•	\$275
Nutrient Management 1 (Introduction)	Jul 8 to Aug 2	**	\$275
Irrigation Water Quality & Treatment	Aug 12 to Sep 6	**	\$275
Field Diagnosis for Disease Management NEW!	Sep 16 to Oct 11	**	\$275
Nutrient Management 2 (Advanced)	Sep 16 to Oct 11	***	\$275
Weed Management	Oct 14 to Nov 8	**	\$275
Success with your Latino Workforce NEW!	Oct 14 to Nov 8	**	\$275
Practical Disease Management NEW!	Nov 11 to Dec 13	**	\$275

*Level: • Introductory: Practical experience but without formal horticultural science education

** Intermediate: Some experience and training, or entry university level

*** Advanced: Experienced, well-trained grower, or upper university level

Success with your Latino Workforce, taught by Dr. Claudio Pasian, will improve positive and effective communication with your Latino/Hispanic coworkers.

Dr. Carrie Harmon is offering two new courses on plant pathology (Field Diagnosis for Disease Management and Practical Disease Management), which both count towards a Plant Health Professional Certificate.

Each course is completely online, and they include pre-recorded videos, an interactive discussion board with PhD professors, helpful resources and quizzes. Course material is available any time of the day, with two new modules added each week over the four weeks of each course, for a total of eight learning modules. Experienced university instructors are available to help and graduates receive a personalized certificate of completion from UF/IFAS. There are courses for every level of knowledge and experience. Thus far, more than 5,400 growers have graduated from these courses!

To register, visit [HERE](#).

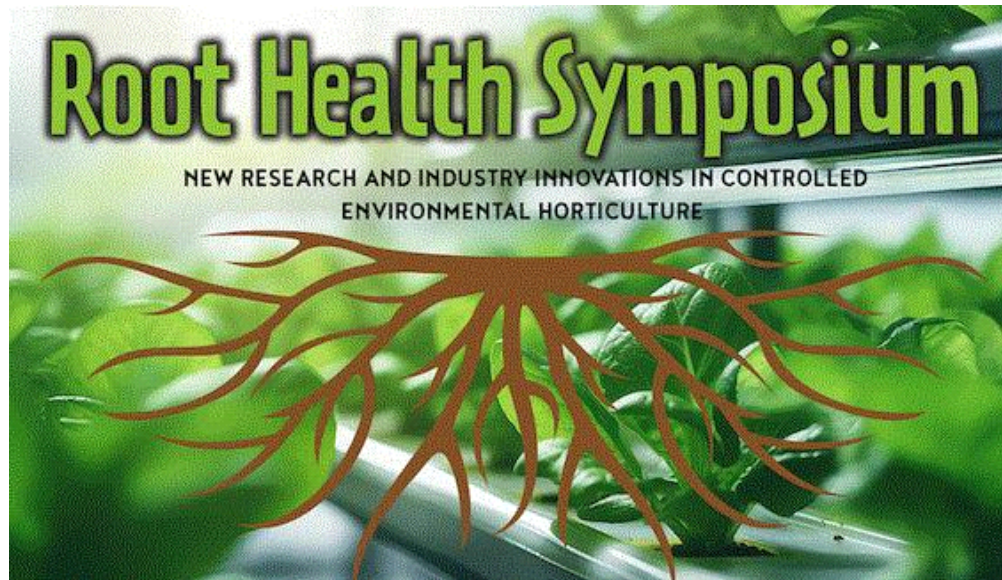
Oh, there's a 20% discount when you register five or more staff. For more information, including discounts for multiple registrations, email them at greenhousetraining@ifas.ufl.edu.



Two more: Roots and retail

UF's Root Health Symposium

Here's a live, in-person class UF is hosting in Gainesville May 6 focused exclusively on root health. The event is for growers of container and hydroponic floriculture, vegetable and hemp crops in greenhouses and other controlled environments. University researchers from Florida, Arkansas, Georgia and Purdue will present their latest findings on a range of topics, including water treatment, control of soil pests and diseases, biocontrols, recirculating nutrient solutions, heavy metals, irrigation, automation, and growing transplants under LEDs. Additionally, industry experts will demonstrate new technologies such as cold plasma and biocontrols.



This is the first event sponsored by FNGLA and a new university/industry Root Alliance.

For just \$75 you get a morning of sessions, lunch, and afternoon research and technology demonstrations at the UF research greenhouses.

Learn more [HERE](#).

TAMU's 40th Retail Summit

Secure your spot at the 40th Anniversary Celebration & Retailing Summit Thought Leadership Event March 21-22, hosted by the Center for Retailing Studies at Texas A&M University. This two-day event promises a blend of nostalgia, innovation and forward-looking insights into the retail industry, set against the backdrop of the elegant Stella Hotel in Bryan, Texas.

Speakers include Garrett Boone, co-founder of The Container Store; Donald Zale, former chairman and CEO of Zale Corporation; Alex Larabee, Senior Vendor Manager, Amazon; Gaurav Patel, Senior Director of Engineering (Store Experience) for H-E-B, and many more.

There's an anniversary celebration dinner the evening before the summit featuring speeches from past center directors, industry dignitaries and the visionaries who've shaped the Center's legacy.

Retailing Summit 2024 is a day dedicated to the future of retail, exploring cutting-edge topics like generative AI, digital commerce, omni-channel retailing and the evolving in-store experience, and customer loyalty.

Learn more [HERE](#).



Finally ...

Where am I off to this time? CAST, aka the [2024 California Spring Trials](#), or "Pack Trials" to those who still remember what a pack is, with fellow scribes Jen Zurko and Bill Calkins, plus video producer Osvaldo Cuevas. No pleasure cruise this, as we'll be working 18-hour days March 19 to 23 to capture the action for you in words, photos and video.



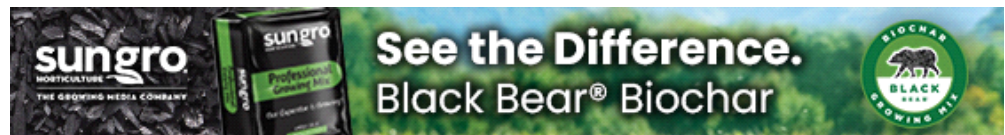
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FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK for more pretty plant pics; short, live videos and some behind-the-scenes shenanigans.

If you're headed that way yourself, look for us and say hello! But do it fast—we don't sit still for long!



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

See you next time!



Chris Beytes
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