

# Proven Winners' Top Pick intros, plus NVS, outdoor furnishings and get Open & Awkward



THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2024

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## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

NVS Crop Insurance  
New Intros From PW  
Beautiful Planters in 30 Sec.  
Speaking of New Varieties  
Book It—But With Plants  
Casual Market Atlanta  
Bits of This and That



## Crop Insurance to Cover Weather Damage

Last week I led off with information about the [upcoming hurricane season](#)—we are expecting a lot of 'em!—and this week I'm leading off with news from the USDA's Risk Management Agency about its newly expanded Nursery Value Select (NVS) crop insurance program. The press release announcing three informational workshop sessions on this expansion explained that these sessions "could be especially beneficial for potted nursery growers." Maybe that's you, and if so, maybe you'd like to catch one of those three informational sessions.

Two of the sessions occur **TODAY, April 18**—I apologize for the late notice—and one is in July:

- **Thursday, April 18 at 1:00 p.m. CDT.** [Join the meeting.](#)
- **Thursday, April 18 at 6:00 p.m. PDT.** [Join the meeting.](#)
- **Thursday, July 18 at 2:00 p.m. CDT.** [Join the meeting.](#)



By “expansion” of the program, they mean the NVS program is now open to all counties in all states. What is the NVS program anyway? It’s a pilot program that allows nursery producers to select the dollar amount of crop insurance coverage that best fits their risk management needs. NVS, which is an asset-based form of insurance, covers damage due, but not limited, to adverse weather conditions; fire (provided weeds and undergrowth near the insured plants or the buildings in which the insured plants are grown are controlled by chemical or mechanical means) and wildlife.



And it’s not just for hurricane damage! Any sort of weather event can be eligible—and gosh, we’ve been having a lot of bad storms of late. Looking into new or different or more crop insurance coverage sounds like a good idea. If you would like more information about NVS before jumping on the webinar, you can find a fact sheet on the program [HERE](#).



## New Intros From Proven Winners

*Colleague Jen Polanz reports on her visit to Four Star Greenhouse.*

Recently I met my colleagues at Ball Publishing Chris Beytes, Jen Zurko and Paul Black at Four Star Greenhouse in Carleton, Michigan, for a day-long open house of new introductions for 2025. More specifically, we met up in Four Star President Tom Smith’s garage/gathering place affectionately called “The Hidiho” where new intros in annuals, perennials, shrubs and houseplants, as well as a new bulb program and hardgoods, were set up for us to peruse.

We’ll roll some of the new intros out over the next couple of newsletters, starting with annuals (plus a new addition to the eco-friendly pots).

Let’s talk dahlias, dahling. This is the first dahlia series to fall under the Proven Winners brand. They wanted more vigor, bigger branching and bigger flowers, and they think they’ve found it *plus* powdery mildew tolerance in the **Dahlia Virtuoso series**. Pictured here is Pinkerific, which they’ve labeled a Top Pick for 2025 (side note: they’ve denoted the Top Picks as ones to start with if you’re overwhelmed with choice). The series also has a red (Classy Carmine) yellow (Daylo Yellow), pink (Rad Raz) and purple (Vibrant Violet).



Proven Winners VP of Marketing Marshall Dirks noted that heliotropes are tricky because they often “show their dead”—meaning you can see the spent blooms on top of the plant (sometimes along with the effects of botrytis), making it look less than ideal. He said **Aromagica Purple** “buries its dead”, meaning the flowers and leaves continue to grow over the spent ones, for a fresh and lush look throughout the season. This scented pollinator-attractor is also a Top Pick for 2025.



Proven Winners teamed up with Green Fuse Botanicals for the genetics behind the **Space Age Begonia series** of Rex Begonias. The foliage naturally is the star here, with three in the series:

Europa (pictured and also a Top Pick), Triton and Black Hole. These are great for texture and color in mixed containers for part shade to shade, and can be used indoors or out, making them a versatile option (and possibly a gateway for indoor plant lovers to experiment with outdoor plants).



Of course, no Proven Winners open house is complete without a new Supertunia introduction, and this year it's **Supertunia Tiara Blue** as a Top Pick, and Tiara Pink. Tiara Blue (pictured) has all the vigor you'd expect from a Supertunia with a royal violet blue color and white luminescent eye. It's a new color pattern for the lineup, which the pink also sports.



And lastly, we have told you [all about the Eco+ Grande pots](#), which they are now beginning to offer in Eco+ Quart sizes (and for which Proven Winners *just* received BPI certification for composting). What we haven't reported on yet is the new, non-plastic tags made from the same substrate as the pots. MasterTag is producing them in limited quantities, and there will be some available this year with more coming. They look and feel like plastic tags, and will hold up just fine if gardeners decide to keep them and chuck them in a plastic bag for future reference, Marshall said.



Check out the [ANNUALS VIDEO](#) we prepared showcasing these varieties and more.



## 30 Seconds to Beautiful Planters

*Continued from above.*

This program might look familiar to those who were in the industry about a decade ago—the 30-Second Planter program from Proven Winners made its debut then but might have been before its time. There were a couple of issues that prevented its success, also: it had a shallow pot that dried out much faster, and consumers were supposed to remove the bottom of the pot, but they typically didn't, said Marshall.

Now, the program is being revived for 2025, driven by the growing popularity of easy container options, with the initial problems fixed and the program even more flexible for retailers. It is designed to allow independents an easy planter option where consumers have three ways to use it. They can:

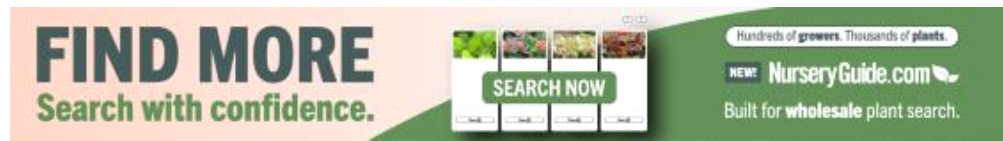
- Drop the whole thing in a larger container,
- Remove the plastic pot and plant it in a planter or hanging basket, or
- They can remove it from the pot and plant it in the ground.

Whatever they do, they're getting an easy finished product. Growers and retailers can order the pots and the component plants, and there's no limit on what plants can be used for the program. That means you can do monoculture containers, mixed, monochromatic—whatever floats your boat.

The program is being offered by Four Star Greenhouse and Pleasant View Gardens for select garden centers as a pilot program in 2024. If it's received favorably, it will get a full rollout with additional sizes and tag options (the tags are an area where they are looking for more feedback—should it come with the individual plant tags or an overall container tag?). [CLICK HERE](#) for info.



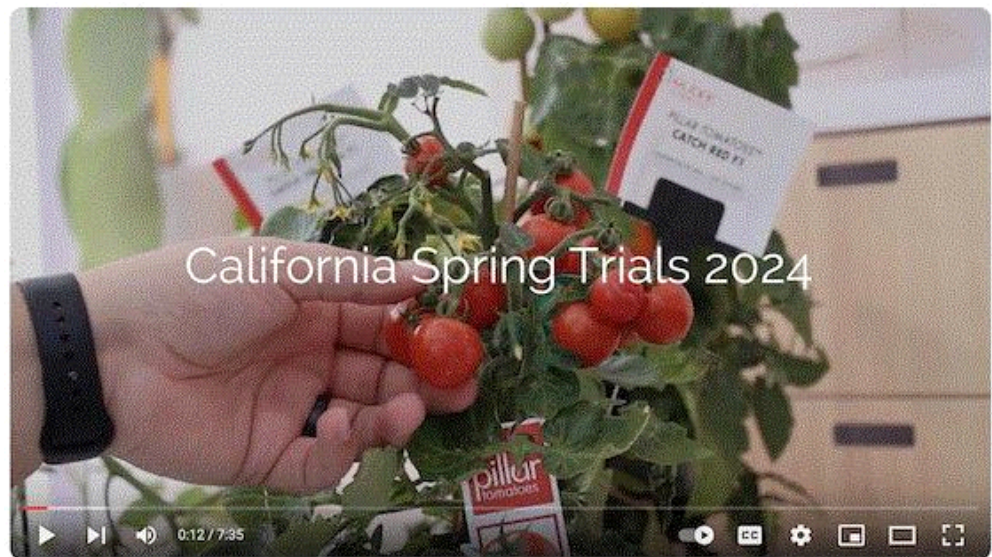
Thanks, JP! Looking forward to what you spotted in the way of Proven Winners' perennials and shrubs. We'll see that next week!



## Speaking of New Varieties

The videos from CAST presenters are trickling in. The latest one is from the folks at Production and Research for Urban Decoration and Consumption, or PRUDAC, for short. From “consumption,” you can probably guess this company specializes in vegetables—and ones that are suited for indoor tabletop and outdoor patio growing and display. I think this category of vegetables has some real untapped potential, and PRUDAC is one of the companies leading the way with it. We may think they only have tiny tomatoes and peppers but they also have peas! Kale! And peppers that look like tiny pumpkins!

And maybe after seeing [THEIR VIDEO](#), you'll jump on their bus and get more excited about smaller-sized fruit and veggie options.



Any other CAST exhibitors have a video they'd like to share in *buZZ!*? Send it along to me at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

## Book It—But With Plants

Tonya C. Schoenfuss, President of Alta Nursery, saw the item I wrote two weeks ago about two apparel retailers—Madewell and Filson—who are working with local bookstores to create book displays that customers can peruse and then scan a QR code in order to purchase the book online. Tonya saw something somewhat related to this on a recent trip.

“I saw your idea about the books, and I wanted to share a somewhat related plant thing I recently saw in Lugano, Switzerland. A flower/interior design shop in the middle of the glitzy shopping

area downtown obviously didn't have a yard to display large plant items in. So they have plants in pots along the street where their shop is. From their [WEBSITE](#): 'In the heart of Lugano it is possible to walk in a street transformed into a jungle, where you can relax and enjoy the beauty of nature.' They use them as nice screens from the road around the cafes and restaurants on their street. And beautiful framing of their shop entrance, too. So you can be enjoying your latte and decide you just need to have the nice potted plant next to your table for your own patio."



Have you considered a similar arrangement with neighboring shops? If so, drop me a note about what you're doing at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

## But Enough About Plants

Many of you also sell items other than plants, such as furniture. If so, you should plan to check out the Casual Market Atlanta Summer and Fall editions. Both events will be on five fully leased floors containing both permanent showrooms plus more than 70 new and expanded resources. The summer dates run July 15-18 while the fall dates run September 16-19 at AmericasMart Atlanta.

Casual Market Atlanta opened at AmericasMart Atlanta in 2023, with the ICFA show previously having been held in Chicago. Since it's inaugural show in August 2023, it's grown 44% year-over-year. As I said, more than 70 showrooms are new for the Summer and Fall editions, including American Eco Living (outdoor furniture), South Sea Rattan (woven furniture) and Tempotest Home (performance fabrics). In addition to these, they'll have plenty of fan favorites, such as CABANACOAST, International Home Miami, Pacific Casual, Suns Outdoors and Tempo Patio.

The shows will also have dozens of temporary exhibitors in addition to the permanent showrooms. For more information on who all will be there, other programming and travel details, visit [CasualMarketAtlanta.com](https://CasualMarketAtlanta.com).

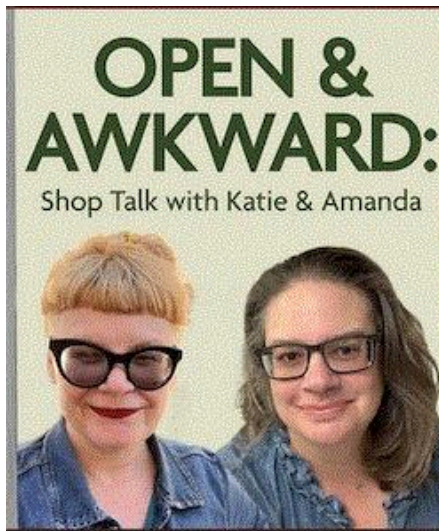
## Bits of This and That

Consider this the potpourri section of today's *buZZ!* with bite-sized bits of info about some hort-related news and events.

**Terrain opens at NY Botanic Garden.** The Urban Outfitter-back garden center opened its latest outpost at Brooklyn's famed research center and botanical hangout. This type of retail experience—a store within a garden institution—is a new experience for both Terrain and the NYBG. According to the retailer's [Facebook page](#), “visitors can expect our signature immersive retail experience—unique plants, seasonal decor, artisan gifts and more.” Visitors can also take advantage of Terrain's signature design services for in-home, special event and gifting needs.

**The Sill is selling outdoor plants.** The venture-backed online and brick-and-mortar houseplant shop has expanded its online offerings to include [items for outdoors](#). Current selections include trees, shrubs, fruit, perennials and ornamental grasses. Who is doing the fulfillment? I tried to find out but a representative replied with “unfortunately we need to pass” in response to my list of questions. I tried!

**The Open & Awkward Podcast.** When two *Green Profit*-adjacent columnists start a podcast, you know it's gonna be good fun. Amanda Thomsen of Aster Gardens fame and digital marketing guru Katie Elzer-Peters discuss all sorts of topics, and it's not just garden retail-related. The pilot episode is up on Spotify, and they have seven more ready to go. Episodes drop on Tuesdays. It's Gen-X realness and I love and appreciate their honesty and openness. Check it out on [SPOTIFY](#). You don't need an account because podcasts are free on the platform.



Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

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

Ellen Wells  
Senior Editor  
Green Profit

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