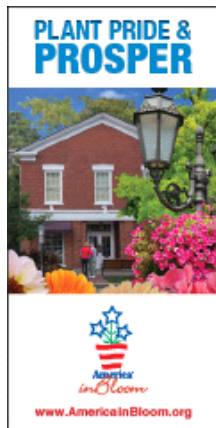


Retailers' Choice, a SCOTUS ruling and Fa-La-La



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Retailers' Choice Awards

I told you last week I'd have the Retailers' Choice Award winners from Cultivate for you this week. And unlike previous RCAs and Cool Product announcements, I'm giving these to you all at once for a change. As a reminder, the Retailers' Choice Awards are selected by a floor-walking troupe of garden retailers who are searching for items they themselves would have in their stores. These awards are presented by The Garden Center Group's Danny Summers the day after those folks walk the floor and make their selections. This year 12 companies received awards for 15 products.

We'll start with **Helleborus Mount Nebo** from Aris Horticulture and **Must Have Perennials**. Mount Nebo, part of the Rockies Helleborus series, is unlike other varieties within that series because its new foliage emerges bright red in the fall and early spring, eventually maturing to a pink, white and green speckled situation. It's buds and blossoms are rosy pink for several weeks, fading to a chartreuse. But the show the foliage puts on is equal or even better than its blooms.



Next up is **Angelonia AngelFlare** from **Ball FloraPlant**. This series of three varieties was bred for a V- or vase-shaped habit. AngelFlare has been bred to intermix nicely in a mixed combo

basket or container, with its flower spikes poking up in an angled manner through whatever it's planted with. It also has big blooms and is heat and humidity tolerant. Black Velvet is the stunner of the three colors, the other two being Cranberry and Orchid Pink (not pictured).



Darwin Perennials' Agastache Summerlong colors Lilac, Lemon and Coral are stunning pollinator-friendly tender perennials. These are heat and drought tolerant plants with lovely muted colors. They flower from frost to frost, too, giving retailers an extended sales window and gardens an extended time for enjoyment. Two other colors exist in the series, as well—Magenta and Peach.



It's A Nono

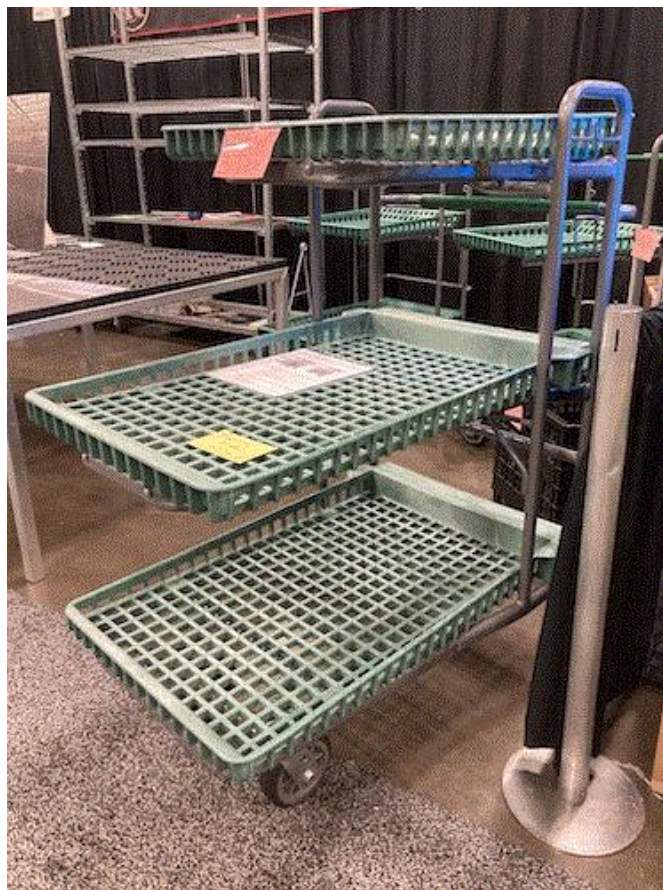
I'm not talking about a no-hitter, nor am I talking about something that is not acceptable. I'm talking about **ForemostCo's** Retailers' Choice Award winner, **Musa Nono Pink Variegated**. I showed you red variegated banana last week, but this one has pink streaks. And to think it starts off white and green! It's currently in TC and they are ramping up production in the coming months.



I love the story behind the organic **Microgreens Kitchen Garden Kit** from **Knowing Nature**. I spoke to the company's founder and CEO Rachel Haber at length, and learned that she came to this product after time spent as a corporate lawyer. Long story short, she dropped it all to have a hand in helping kids and adults build their appreciation for growing their own food. You've gotta start somewhere, and microgreens is as simple as it gets. The kit includes a self-watering growing tray and enough coco coir discs and seeds (three different kinds) to grow three crops of microgreens. The tray is sized to fit on a windowsill and to be dishwasher safe. The company also has those items sold separately, but the kit is a great starter project. Not just for kids! My mom can't make it outside any longer but she still longs to grow something. This would be perfect for older adults like her.



Finally, it's here—the **Three-Shelf Shopping Cart**! This beauty comes from the folks at [R.W. Rogers](#) and was a collaboration between The Garden Center Group and the company's president, Bob Rogers. Note that though the top shelves do not fold up, it does nest nicely. **The bigger the cart, the more customers (might) buy.**



Proven Winners Takes Two

Proven Winners took home two RCAs. Their first is for the **30-Second Planter**. They've had the concept of a drop-in container previously but this product had been reimaged for a limited relaunch for spring 2024. It's meant to be an easy access point for budding container gardeners by allowing them to simply drop the 30-Second Planter into their own decorative pot. I like it because it saves time, labor and materials on the home gardener's end. Drop it in, and voila, you're done. A full rollout is in store for spring 2025.



Proven Winners' second RCA is for **Unplugged Red Salvia**. This is a truly scarlet-red coloration and will bloom non-stop for months on end. Tolerant of humidity, drought and heat, this mid-sized plant is just the right size for containers, but also works well in the landscape. Personally I think the color is phenomenal. Also, no deadheading needed!



This next plant not only gets a Retailers' Choice Award, but it also gets a "Best Plant Name" award from *me*—**Li'l Annie Oakleaf** from **Star Roses and Plants**. Great name, right? But it gets the more important RCA due to its compact habit (3-4 ft. tall and 4-5 ft. wide), it's well-branched nature and its ability to be less impacted by foliar disease. Also, its flowers turn pinkish after the initial white blooms. Fun!



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Metal Art and Pretty Plants

Steel Heart gets a Retailers' Choice Award specifically for their **metal dragonflies**, but all of their garden art are spectacular. I spoke to the man in the booth (apologies for not remembering your name!) who designs pretty much every piece. He said he switched from producing these items from China to India for patriotic reasons, and it turns out the uptick in craftsmanship was well worth the change. This dandelion you see here has more than 2,500 individual pieces to it, and it's all made by hand. He's impressed with these tradespeople's skills and so were the RCA judges.



The next two are no strangers to awards given out by retailers. Both of **Suntory's** Sun Parasol FiredUp Orange Dipladenia hybrid and Sun Parasol XP Bluephoria Mandevilla won The Garden Center Group's Cool Product Award at TPIE last January, and I [wrote in more detail about them](#) at the time. Still amazing innovations within the mandevilla/dipladenia class. Oh, and the news is that four new FiredUp colors are on their way.



Sun Parasol FiredUp Orange



Sun Parasol XP Bluephoria (the darker flower) mixed in with Sun Parasol Original XP Mauvelous

Wrapping It Up

Syngenta also took home two RCAs. The first is for their latest addition to the Calliope line of interspecific geraniums. The new **Calliope Large Dark Salmon** is everything its name says it is. The salmon color is on the darkish side, yes, but I'm pretty sure the "Dark" in the name is a reference to its darker foliage. And it's an overall large plant, from its form to its flowers. I "ooo"ed when it was brought on stage.



Syngenta's **Cherry Blast Tomato** is an upgraded trailing variety that comes from Floranova's stash of vegetables for small spaces. Use it in large containers or even in hanging baskets to keep out of reach of your friendly neighborhood groundhog (or is that just me?). Best yet, it has proven resistance to ToMV strains 1 and 2 and is tolerant to late blight. That tolerance and resistance profile is why it'll produce a heavy crop of cherry-sized fruits all through the growing season.



And finally, **Terra Nova's Lion Cub Rudbeckia** is the cutest little rudbeckia out there—and it does look like the hairy scruff of a lion cub. It forms a naturally tight mound of emerald green foliage with small pom pom-like, chocolate-eyed golden yellow flowers. Lion Cub will bloom June

through October and is a fast and vigorous crop. It'll be great for fall containers and displays, too.



Bill on a SCOTUS Ruling

The follow item comes to us as near-breaking news from Green Profit business columnist Bill McCurry, who is just the guy to elucidate a Supreme Court ruling about ... business!

To quote Judge Gordon J. Tucker who wrote in 1866: "No man's life, liberty or property are safe while the legislature is in session." I will add the Supreme Court to this list because of their June 6 tax decision in [Connelly v. United States, No. 23-146](#). The court unanimously held that a corporation's contractual obligation to redeem shares is not necessarily a liability that reduces a corporation's value for purposes of the federal estate tax. In layperson's language, life insurance policies on owners' lives, owned by the company, and usually used to buy out remaining partners or provide working capital, may be taxable and included in the corporation's income and valuation for estate tax. The Connelly owner's estate was hit with an \$800,000+ tax bill.







































While garden center owners may think their estate is too small to worry about, check with your tax counsel. The current estate tax exclusion limits were part of the 2017 tax law changes, which are set to expire in slightly more than a year.

Thanks for this update, Bill. As always and with everything, when in doubt about something which is not your specialty—taxes, medical conditions or plumbing—ask a professional. It'll save you a bunch of trouble.

It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like ...

In her email to me about this week's Pinterest trends, National Garden Bureau's Gail Pabst said, "I guess they are right in saying Pinterest is three months ahead ... it's Christmas crafts time!" Four of the 19 trends that saw the largest change in number of searches for gardening, home decor and DIY crafts over the last month involved Christmas, and two of them involved something to do with fall. These may be the dog days of summer but I guess thinking of and planning for fall and winter holidays is one way to keep cool.

Also? FreakBob refers to SpongeBob. Can we maybe make some sort of SpongeBob décor out of mums or corn stalks? If you do it, I want to know about it.

Keywords	Weekly change	Monthly change	↓	Yearly change
 kitchen design modern small		3%	2,500%	400%
 fashion sewing pattern		-4%	1,000%	60%
 crafts for bf		70%	800%	600%
 christmas crafts diy		1%	700%	-60%
 fall decor ideas for the home		3%	600%	7%
 perler crafts		-5%	600%	200%
 my plant		30%	500%	10,000%+
 autumn home		40%	500%	-30%
 cute polymer clay		20%	400%	-60%
 freakbob mobile		-40%	400%	10,000%+
 coastal bedroom decorating		20%	400%	-70%
 above ground pool hacks		-5%	300%	-60%
 scrapbook inspiration		8%	300%	200%
 built in around fireplace		-1%	300%	-10%
 elegant christmas		10%	300%	40%
 perler creations		0%	300%	-20%
 seashell christmas ornaments		-6%	300%	50%
 blind corner cabinet solutions		-4%	300%	20%
 christmas decor ideas for living room		5%	200%	-50%

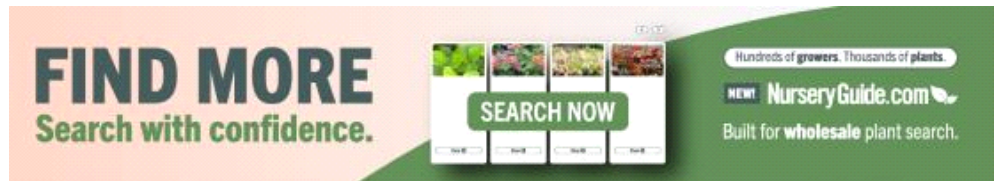
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