

Hurricane Damage, Generosity; Mast Trial Faves; Star's Winning Roses



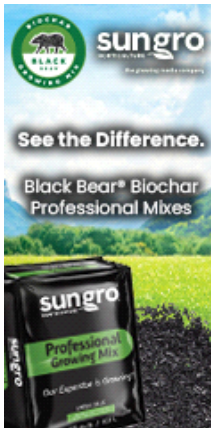
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# GrowerTalks' Acres Online

News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Orban's hit hard  
Carolina Native Nursery, too  
Vic still supporting students  
Favorites from the Mast trial  
Three SRP roses get awards  
Make your research needs known  
Herbicide application video  
Trade Fair Aalsmeer



## Hurricane relief resources

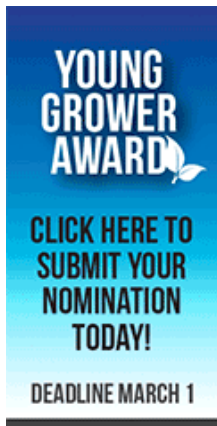
*If you are a victim of Hurricane Helene, you probably aren't waiting for ME to give you info about obtaining assistance. But just in case you or someone you know needs additional resources, here's a timely piece from Mary Beth Cowardin, Matt Mika and Rachel Pick of AmericanHort:*

### After the Storm: Essential Resources for Disaster Recovery and Support

We extend our heartfelt concern and support to our AmericanHort members and industry colleagues affected by Hurricane Helene. We are thinking of you and understand many of you are facing significant challenges. We want to offer our assistance and provide resources to aid in recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Here are a few tips for what to do in the days after the storm, and available resources:

- Photograph and document damage before you start any clean-up efforts.
- Authorities have likely already identified road obstructions, utility outages and hazardous situations. Continue to watch for such obstructions and notify local authorities if needed.
- If you haven't already, secure your structures and buildings and make any necessary repairs to prevent further weather intrusion and to ensure the safety of you and anyone in the area.
- If needed, reach out to disaster assistance agencies to inform them of your situation. If you



have crop insurance, you may be eligible for disaster relief or low-interest loans. Be sure to contact the relevant agency for guidance on how to proceed.

- Contact your county/local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) office.
- Contact your state horticultural association (see below) or Department of Agriculture for assistance.
- Contact AmericanHort with any questions or requests for assistance.
- The federal government, as well as your state and local governments, may offer a variety of assistance options:

**USDA Disaster Assistance** – USDA provides a range of programs for agricultural producers affected by natural disasters. You can explore options for emergency loans, crop insurance, and disaster recovery support through the USDA's Disaster Assistance programs.

**USDA Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)** – The ECP provides funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to restore farmland damaged by natural disasters and for emergency water conservation measures in severe droughts.

**USDA Tree Assistance Program (TAP)** – In the 2014 Farm Bill, the Agricultural Act of 2014 authorized the Tree Assistance Program to provide financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disaster. Check out this fact sheet.

**USDA Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)** – The EFRP provides funding to restore privately owned forests. Assistance helps restore forest health on land damaged by floods, hurricanes or other natural disasters.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** – FEMA offers disaster assistance to individuals and businesses, including grants and temporary housing assistance. Learn more about how FEMA can support you. Learn how to apply for disaster assistance [HERE](#).

**U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)** – The SBA offers low-interest loans to homeowners, renters, non-profits and businesses of all sizes affected by declared disasters. Learn more about areas eligible for SBA disaster loans [here](#).

**State & Local Resources** – Be sure to check with your state and local agencies for additional assistance programs that may be available in your area. Here are the state nursery, landscape associations you might contact:

Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association—Tal Coley, CEO, [tcoley@fngla.org](mailto:tcoley@fngla.org), 407-295-7994

Georgia Green Industries Association—Lanie Riner, Executive Director, [lriner@asginfo.net](mailto:lriner@asginfo.net), 706-443-1440

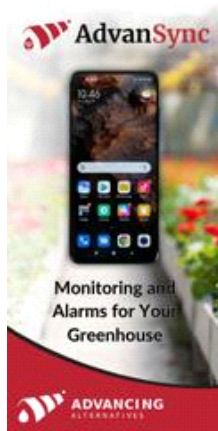
North Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association—Wendi Doak, Director of Marketing and Communications, [wdoak@ncnla.com](mailto:wdoak@ncnla.com), 919-816-9119, ext. 1002

South Carolina Green Industry Association—Adrienne Patrick, Executive Director, 803-939-6884

Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association—Danae Bouldin, Executive Director, [danae.tnla@gmail.com](mailto:danae.tnla@gmail.com), 931-473-3951

Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association—Katie Hellebush, Executive Director, [info@vnla.org](mailto:info@vnla.org), 804-256-2700

For those who weren't affected by Hurricane Helene, but wish to help, the Red Cross is accepting donations. You can donate [HERE](#).



For additional assistance, or more information on who you might contact, please contact AmericanHort at 614-487-1117.



## The extent of the damage to growing operations

This is not a time when I want to be pestering my grower and retailer friends for details of the damages to their businesses. But I have seen an industry report covering Georgia and Tennessee indicating plenty of losses—mostly plastic coverings, and some structural damage to greenhouses due to wind and also trees. Crops were hit the hardest, either from wind or from flooding. Fall mums gone, poinsettia crops gone.

Also challenging has been the extended loss of power and cell service, affecting recovery efforts. And, of course, roads have been closed, limiting access to rescue and restoration crews. So basically there's no business being done, and not likely to be much in the coming weeks in the hard-hit areas. People have more important things to worry about than fall plants, unfortunately.

It seems crazy to me ... I grew up in Florida and so am used to the idea of hurricanes hitting my state. And the Gulf states. But the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee ... and to see the devastation caused by all that rain flooding down the narrow mountain passes is just mind-boggling. All of us at Ball Publishing are thinking of our industry friends in that region right now.



## Orban's Nursery hit hard by Helene

One story I did get in detail was from fourth-generation Orban's Nursery in Bradenton, Florida, which was hit hard by the tidal surge from Hurricane Helene. The local ABC affiliate filmed [THIS REPORT](#) from the nursery, showing flood waters still in the greenhouses. Orban's, famous locally for poinsettias, lost about 150,000 pots to the storm, plus all their other wholesale and retail plants.





A veteran of Florida storms, current owner Tyler Orban, who inherited the business from his late father, Marty, and [bought the 22 acres of land from a family trust in 2021](#), was asked if this was the worst hurricane he'd ever seen.

"Yeah, by far. We've had worse winds and rain, but the storm surge from this one was just insane ... It hurts, it's rough. There are no words for it," he said, when asked about the impact to the 110-year-old family business, which has been in Manatee County, Florida, for more than 60 years. But as for the future? "Do you rebuild? How do you rebuild?"

"We're going to try," he answered positively. "We don't really know where to start yet, but we're working on it."

That's the spirit, Tyler! You may have water in your greenhouses, but you've got horticulture in your veins.

First order of business—after getting over the shock, that is—was to organize a public volunteer cleanup day Sunday, October 5, with a bbq lunch for all volunteers. On Facebook, the event had 340 shares, so it looks like the community is on their side. And his sisters in Colorado have set up this [Go Fund Me](#) page to help with the recovery efforts.

Being right on the Gulf Coast, Orban's has had its share of storm challenges. They made news in 2017 when a tornado and then hurricane Irma caused \$200,000 in damage. And in 2022, [Hurricane Ian](#) ripped off a lot of their shade and plastic ... but the impact wasn't as bad as they



were expecting, they said.



## More proof of how generous plant people are

Again, I've had to rely on Facebook to find out what's happened to some growers. Such as Carolina Native Nursery in Burnsville, North Carolina, which was hit by floodwaters that washed away 90% of their plants and much of their infrastructure. Owner Bill Jones posted [THIS VIDEO](#) to YouTube so you could see for yourself what so many have been through.



Wrote Bill in the description: "In the video, you will see the damage and the rebuilding we are facing ... like so many others. However, you will also see that we are determined to come together to do what we need to do to REGROW the #nativeplant industry in western North Carolina, and beyond."

Like Tyler above, that never-quit spirit seems to permeate the horticulture industry.

For which he was rewarded, because within two days, help arrived in the form of the Caldwell County master gardeners, who are holding a native plant sale with 100% of the proceeds going to help Carolina Native Nursery rebuild. And also online plant marketer [Izel Native Plants](#), which is [donating 15% of the revenue](#) from orders they ship the week of October 14. Great stories! I'm sure there are 100 more out there.

## Grow What Sells

The 2026 Proven Winners® new introductions and National Plants of the Year are the high-demand varieties that drive traffic and boost sales.



## Vic Ball still supporting the industry

This Facebook post by Dr. Kim Williams from Kansas State University was gratifying to see; Kim recently visited one of her students, Lauren Swearingen, during her [Vic & Margaret Ball Internship](#) at Altman Plants in Peyton, Colorado, and wrote about it for the American Floral Endowment, which oversees the scholarship. Part of the scholarship provides the funds for the professor to visit the student, completing the circle, you might say.



Kim and Lauren at Altman's location in Colorado.

[Here is Kim's piece for AFE](#). Thanks, Kim! And congratulations, Lauren!

Vic Ball, part of the second generation of Ball Horticultural Company, was editor of *GrowerTalks* for most of his career. He passed away in 1997, but his love for the industry and its students lives on!



## Favorites from the Mast Young Plants 2024 Trial Garden

There are scores of annual/perennial summer trials around the U.S. and Canada and it's pretty much impossible to cover them all, so I tend to deliver comments from those who deliver them to me. Such as [Mast Young Plants](#), which just published its very nice and quite comprehensive [2024 Trial Garden Report](#), featuring the results and data from their annual trial.

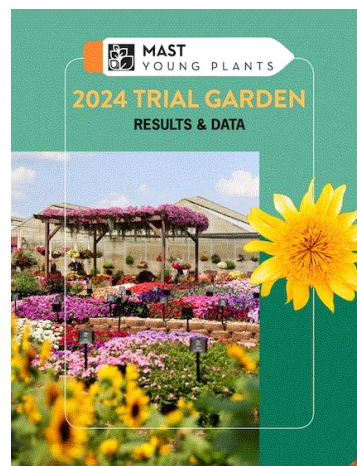




I've been there, and it's impressive! One hundred genera, 1,500 varieties, and this year 130 new introductions. They got lots of visitors this summer, too—nearly 1,000 from almost 500 greenhouse businesses, plus broker sales reps, 11 different breeding companies ... they even do a Retailer Night in the Garden and Customer Appreciation Night. I'll bet those are fun ... and they find more than a few beer cans in the hanging baskets the next morning ...

Anyway, a few takeaways from the Trial Garden Report starts with the **Top 10 Consumer Favorites**—picked not by consumers, it turns out, but by all the visitors to the trial:

1. Coleus Flame Thrower Adobo Pink (Ball FloraPlant)
2. Gomphrena Ping Pong Purple (Sakata)
3. Helianthus Sunfinity Double Yellow (Syngenta Flowers)
4. Angelonia AngelFlare Black (Ball FloraPlant)
5. Tradescantia Bridal Veil Purple (Danziger)
6. Petchoa SuperCal Premium Rose Star (Sakata)
7. Verbena Vanessa Bicolor Light Pink (Danziger)
8. Ipomoea Sweet Georgia Black Pulse (Green Fuse Botanicals)
9. Vinca Rosea XDR Nirvana Blackberry (Syngenta Flowers)
10. Petunia Painted Love Purple (Syngenta Flowers)



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## Favorites (continued)

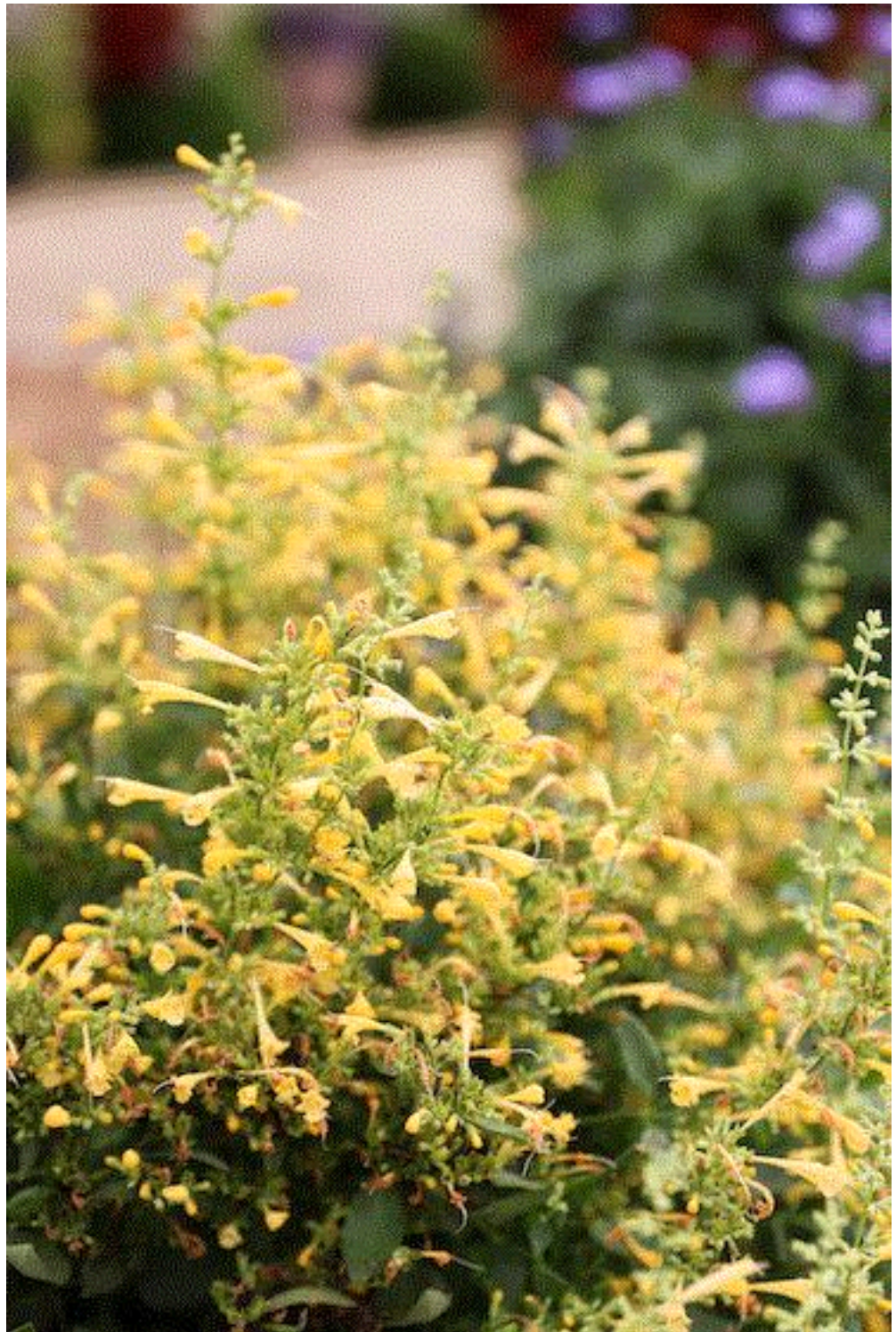
Another group of favorites is the **Top Performers Based on Staff Evaluation**:

1. Kwik Kombo Blueberry Twist Mix (Syngenta Flowers)





2. *Agastache* Summerlong Lemon (Darwin Perennials)



3. Petunia Capella Fuchsia Diamond (Danziger)
4. Petunia Dekko Pinwheel Purple (Syngenta Flowers)
5. Calibrachoa Lia Abstract Lemon Cherry (Danziger)
6. Bidens Timeless Blazing Flames (Danziger)
7. Angelonia AngelFlare Cranberry (Ball FloraPlant)
8. Celosia Kelos Fire Red (Beekenkamp)
9. Eucalyptus Pulverulenta Baby Blue Bouquet (Benary)
10. Calibrachoa Chameleon Pink Splash (Westhoff)
11. Euphorbia Euphoric White (Syngenta Flowers)

Interestingly, not a single visitor favorite in that list ...



I guess the big gold star goes to these two top performers:

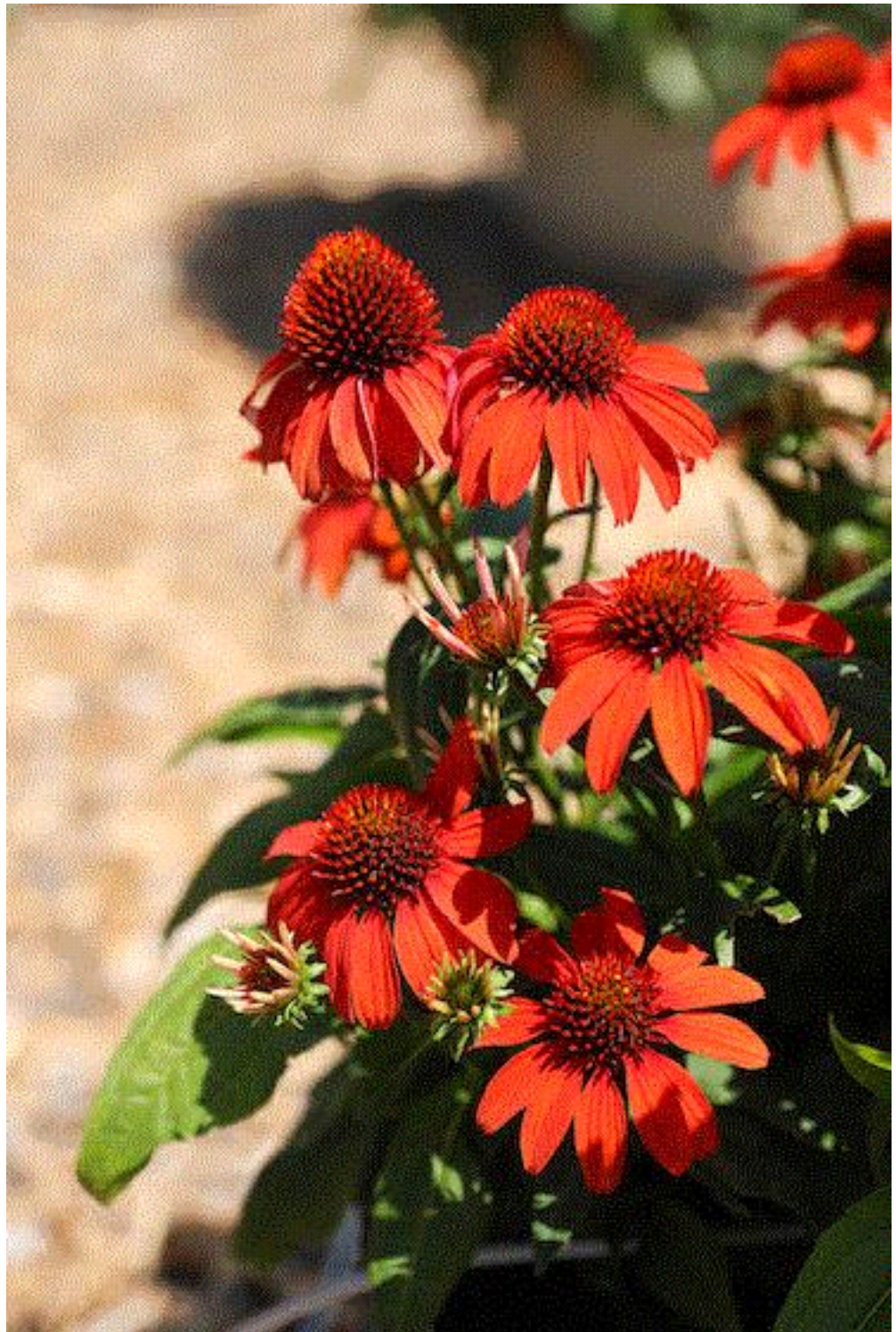
**Best Overall Performance Annual:**

Begonia Interspecific Stonehedge Rose Bronze Leaf (Benary)



**Best Overall Performance Perennial:**

Echinacea Guatemala Papaya (Danziger)



There's lots more to read about and view in the trial book, including the Best of the Best; the Top 2024 Combinations; a Plants Per Pot trial (3, 4 or 5 in a 16-in. pot); a fertilizer trial comparing slow release to daily liquid feed and a control of no feed; and a houseplant sun trial, to see how much sun foliage houseplants can take.

Check it out [HERE!](#)





## Three SRP roses get AGRS awards

**Star Roses and Plants** of West Grove, Pennsylvania (a division of Ball Horticultural Company and hence a sister company to Ball Publishing—for full disclosure) has won three awards from the 2025 **American Garden Rose Selections** (AGRS) testing program. AGRS recognizes roses that are easy to care for, disease-resistant and suitable for different regions of the country.

The 2025 AGRS winners are:

- Blushing Drift—a Regional Choice Winner in all six regions.
- Ruby Red—a Regional Choice Winner in four regions: North Central, Northwest, South Central and Southwest.
- Veranda Fiesta—a Regional Choice Winner in three regions: Northwest, South Central and Southwest.

All roses entered into the AGRS are tested for two years in six different geographical regions, each containing two test gardens. Additional characteristics that are evaluated include vigor, foliage proportion, plant habit, flowering effect, rebloom habit, bloom form, aging quality of blooms, fragrance and hardiness.

Here are Stars' descriptions of the three winners:

### **Blushing Drift**



Blushing Drift displays attractive, double pink flower clusters with a warm, yellow center. Its compact size, disease resistance and heavy blooming make it a stunning and reliable landscape choice.

### **Ruby Red**



Ruby Red is a compact rose that blooms heavily. The flower color is dark red and non-fading against dark green, glossy foliage. It stands out beautifully in the garden and makes an excellent container presentation.

**Veranda Fiesta**





Veranda Fiesta has a very strong, bright flower color, which contrasts nicely against dark green, glossy foliage. It is a heavy bloomer and performs well in containers or as a low hedge in the garden.

### **Make your research needs known**

The Peer Review System for the [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) (NIFA), part of USDA,

needs your help. NIFA is recruiting industry representatives—growers, packers, shippers and staff from organizations that represent specialty crops—to review pre-applications for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) for 2025. This is an opportunity for the various agriculture sectors to make sure that SCRI projects are tackling a critical need for each sector. There is a category for nursery/greenhouse and also for CEA crops, so you are needed!

The time commitment for a relevancy reviewer is about 15-20 hours total, spread over two months (Dec-Feb). The review panels will take place for about two hours during the week of February 3.

If you are interested, click [HERE](#) to complete this scheduling poll noting that you're available to review and indicating your area of expertise.

You'll also need to create or update your account on the Peer Review System website [HERE](#).

And oh, hey! You won't just be doing it out of the goodness of your heart, either: Eligible reviewers that complete their reviews and attend the two-hour panel get a \$265 honorarium! You can take somebody out to a nice dinner with that. Or do what I'd do: Go to Costco, get four prime ribeyes, a Duckhorn cabernet, a giant cheesecake and a tank of gas and still have change left over.

If you have any questions about the role and duties of a reviewer, you can ask questions of the Relevance Review Panel Manager, [Kay Rentzel](#).

*Note: Academic scientists and USDA employees are ineligible from serving as relevance reviewers ... but extension agents are fine!*

## Video on proper herbicide application

This sounds handy for anyone applying herbicides in or around their greenhouse or nursery. From Envu (formerly Bayer), "Herbicide Calibration" is an educational video demonstrating precision preemergence herbicide application, to help growers deliver the intended benefits of long-lasting, broad-spectrum control, reducing labor demands and potential re-treatment costs.

Like any pest management tool, preemergence herbicides must be applied properly to deliver the intended benefits of long-lasting, broad-spectrum control. To get the best performance from a preemergence herbicide, whether it is applied in granular form or a liquid spray, it must be applied uniformly to the soil surface at the correct rate. To ensure that the herbicide is applied properly, applicators must first calibrate their application equipment and process. In addition to covering the required personal protective equipment (also known as PPE), "Herbicide Calibration" demonstrates correct calibration for a backpack sprayer and walk-behind spreader.





“University research has shown that treating a nursery bed in two directions offers the best distribution of herbicide granules,” said Janna Beckerman, Ph.D., Green Solutions Team specialist at Envu. She adds, “In terms of overall costs, the number one expense in a nursery is weed control. University experts estimate the cost of weed control in a container-grown nursery to be greater than \$4,000 per acre, which includes labor and chemical costs.”

Watch the video [HERE](#).

## Trade Fair Aalsmeer – my favorite international trade show

Although I haven't been since 2019, I enjoy [Trade Fair Aalsmeer](#) even more than IPM Essen, which I attend every year. Why? Because it is all about plants, many of them provided by local Dutch growers, so I can see first-hand the kinds of products in the market—how they're grown and how they're packaged and marketed.

Scheduled for November 5-7, it's held at Royal FloraHolland, the giant Dutch auction, just outside of Amsterdam (a fun spot to visit in its own right). It's a big show, with 600 exhibitors and more than 20,000 attendees from all over Europe and beyond.



Being at the Auction, if you know people or ask around, you can get a tour of the facility. There's also Waterdrinker, a giant flower and plant wholesaler within Royal FloraHolland, which also gives you an idea of the tremendous selection and quality of the Dutch floriculture sector. I never miss a chance to pop by and drool. I took Laurie once, and she said we should move to Holland for a year or two just for the chance to buy all the cool stuff they offer that you can't find at home.

I bring this up because if there's one more show to put on your radar to attend once in your horticultural life, it's this one. Oh, going on at the same time is IFTF—the International Floriculture Trade Fair, just a few minutes away in Vijfhuizen. It's November 6-8, and covers mostly cut flowers, so it's a great second reason to visit the Netherlands in November. Granted, the weather could be a bit sketchy, but maybe not, and the tourists are gone and the prices are down!

**Finally ...**





Sad news for all you Short Course ... er, sorry, Cultivate attendees who like a relaxing evening out in Columbus: The famous Char Bar, located across the street from the Convention Center, was crashed into by an alleged drunk driver in early September, causing extensive structural damage. No word on when they'll reopen.

As some wag online said, "Now it's truly a hole-in-the-wall bar."

Feel free to email me at [beytes@growertalks.com](mailto:beytes@growertalks.com) if you have ideas, comments or questions.

See you next time!



**Chris Beytes**

Editor-in-Chief

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