

HortScholars, Greenhouse Controls & Happy Holly Days



News and commentary for the nursery & landscape market

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE **greenPROFIT** MAGAZINE

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- HortScholar Opportunity
- Winter Trade Show Season
- New Hardy Cherry Laurels
- It's Camellia Time
- Fine-tuning Greenhouse Controls
- Predictive Weather
- Happy Holly Days!

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HortScholar Opportunity Open Now

AmericanHort is taking applications for the 2025 HortScholar Program. This program brings horticulture students from across the country to Cultivate every year and immerses them within the horticulture industry. HortScholars gain industry insights, hands-on experience, support with career advancement and exposure to a wide range of career paths, many of which students don't truly understand until they get to participate. Most of all, students will get the opportunity to network with many individuals and make lifelong connections. Students in past cohorts continually describe the opportunity as incredible.

Students selected will receive an all-access pass to Cultivate'25, complimentary lodging and meals, exclusive networking opportunities, mentorship, and a one-year AmericanHort membership. Most of all, they'll have a chance to present a topic of their choice to attendees, putting them directly in front of hiring businesses.

The program is open to all students studying ornamental horticulture or related fields in North America. Applications are due January 31, so there's still plenty of time. Please make sure to share this opportunity with any students that might be interested. You can read more about the program and apply [HERE](#).

NEW FOR 2027

PW
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Get Ready for Trade Show Season

I know—we all have the holidays on our minds, but now is the best time to make plans to attend winter trade shows. Two January shows in particular that stand out to me are the [Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show \(MANTS\)](#) and the [Gulf States Horticulture Expo \(GSHE\)](#). If you're anywhere near the southeastern U.S. these are some of the best opportunities to scout out all the new varieties and products hitting the market in 2025.

MANTS is held January 8-10 in Baltimore, Maryland. Known as “The Masterpiece of Trade Shows,” this show boasts non-stop action with over 900 exhibitors. The first show of the year does a great job ringing in the new year with new products, the latest trends and innovations. This show means business.

GSHE is held a couple weeks later on January 22 – 25 in Mobile, Alabama. This show brings exhibitors from across the deep south with very specialized products that support businesses in this specialized climate. A full-day of educational sessions kicks off the show followed by two days of floor-hitting excitement. Plus, Mobile offers a wonderful selection of food for those that want to venture off-site and grab something special.

Come to think of it, both MANTS and GSHE might be battling for the best trade show location for seafood aficionados. Maybe we'll have to solve this long-enduring debate between two seafood titans: the Chesapeake region vs. the Gulf.



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New Hardy Cherry Laurels from Concept Plants

If you're planning to attend MANTS next month, make sure you swing by Concept Plants and check out the new line of cold-hardy Cherry Laurels (*Prunus laurocerasus*) that will be previewed at the show. Three new introductions will be exhibited, with two being hardy to USDA Zone 5a and the third tolerating temperatures in Zone 6a.

With such an amazing plant in warmer climates, having the ability to enjoy these robust shrubs in many of the colder climates is a huge plus. Moreover, the improved cold tolerance opens new markets for the industry to sell cherry laurels—a win for everyone.



From left to right: Volcano, Green Goblet & Greenfinity.

The new introductions include Volcano, a compact shrub with a bushy habit. Reaching about 60-in. tall and 47-in. wide with dark, shiny foliage this plant stays evergreen all year with new foliage emerging as bronze red (thus the name Volcano).

Greenfinity is another compact bushy cultivar with similar size to Volcano, but has a lovely lime-green year round foliage color. Both of these are hardy to Zone 5a.

The third introduction, Green Goblet, is a shorter shrub, reaching only 48-in. tall, but 60-in. wide, with glossy leaves and nice bronze-red new growth. This one is only hardy to Zone 6a.



A field of Volcano being grown at Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas in Oregon.

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In the Garden: It's Camellia Time



Camellia sasanquas are an annual fall and winter highlight at the Hammond Research Station.

I truly hope that everyone in the Southeastern U.S. has been enjoying the camellias over the last few weeks. At the Hammond Trial Gardens, Dr. Damon Abdi and I are experiencing the waning stages of blooms for our *C. sasanquas*, which always put on a show at the station. The prolific blooms covered our *C. sasanquas* for several weeks since November, offering additional appeal to the landscape, as the recently fallen flowers cover the ground in a delicate layer of pink petals.

While temperatures continue to cool down, our gardens are heating up with the next round of camellia blooms. The hybrid Shi-Shi Gashira Camellia takes the spotlight next, providing profuse pink blooms to the landscape. The compact, slow growing form of this hybrid camellia lends itself well to the landscape by offering evergreen foliage throughout the year that becomes chock-full of color right around the time when we bid farewell to *C. sasanqua*'s flowers.

As we flip our calendars to 2025, we can look forward to the late winter appearance of flowers from a third camellia: *C. japonica*. This final flush of flowers appears over the larger leaves of *C. japonica*, a key identifying characteristic versus the smaller-leaved *C. sasanqua*.



One of my favorite *C. sasanqua* stands at the Hammond Research Station.

There are plenty of options at your disposal when it comes to considering what camellia to use in your landscape.

Dr. Abdi said, “A range of colors and flower forms can be chosen from, including whites, pinks and red hues, and single, semi-double, peony and rose forms (among many others).”

The petal colors stand out against the green, glossy foliage with the yellow stamens of certain varieties, offering a bright color to further highlight these showy specimens. These long-lived plants can be remembered with a simple rhyme: blooms when its cold, blooms when its old.

Camellias offer excellent winter interest. Through selecting a suite of species and varieties, winter color for the southern landscape can be provided from Thanksgiving through Valentines Day—which just happens to be our favorite season!



As autumn wanes, the Shi-Shi hybrids take center stage.



Fine-tuning Greenhouse Controls

If you're propagating in house, you'll want to make sure you tune in TOMORROW to the American Floral Endowment's Grow Pro Webinar. Dr. Paul Fisher of the University of Florida will be sharing tips and strategies for fine-tuning greenhouse controls, particularly for young plant production. I imagine most of us know that growing young plants comes with an entirely different set of challenges. This webinar should help you and give you a few ideas of some options available to make life a bit easier.

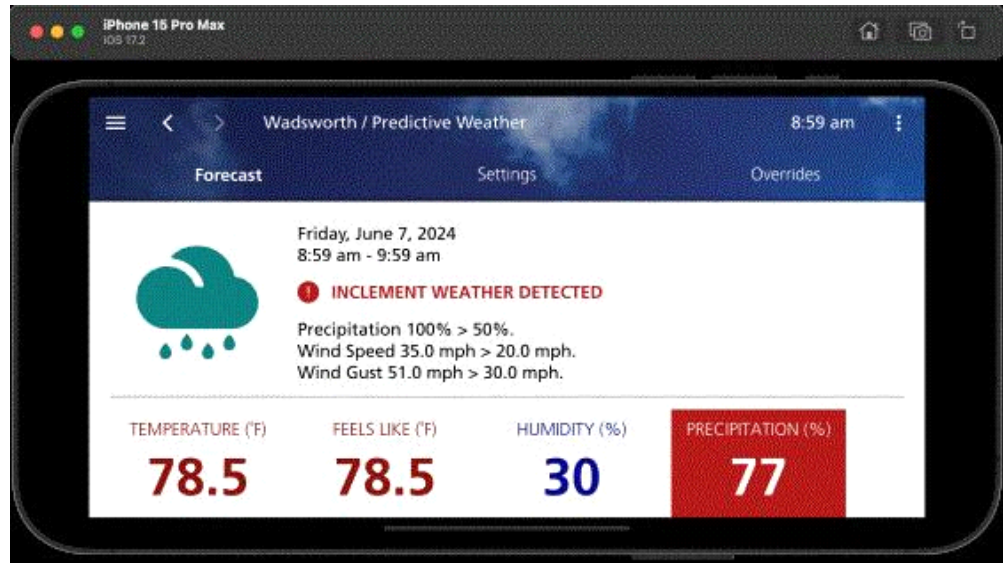
The webinar is scheduled for TOMORROW, Tuesday, December 17 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern/Noon Central. The webinar is free, so register [HERE](#).



Predictive Weather by Wadsworth

Living in the Gulf South, I can tell you that predicting weather is a bit tricky. The old adage, if you don't like the weather, just wait 15 minutes is real. Although, that doesn't necessarily mean it's going to get nicer! Growers must deal with weather changes more than most and any tool that can help is a welcome surprise.

Wadsworth Control Systems has announced Predictive Weather, a service that enhances the Seed control system with advanced, proactive weather forecasting. Using precision location data, Predictive Weather can anticipate and react to shifts in temperature, humidity, wind and precipitation. These early predictions allow the control system to adjust fans and vents, and take other protective measures to safeguard crops and structures.



With localized weather, automated actions and cloud integration for real-time updates, Protective Weather is taking steps to make growers lives a bit easier and more streamlined. You can learn more by visiting wadsworthcontrols.com.



Happy Holly Days!

The following excerpt was previously published by Dr. Abdi, Dr. Stagg and me, however, I found it fitting to reuse it in this issue of NLI.

With the short days and long nights of December, a splash of color in the landscape is always welcome. Few plants symbolize the season quite like the fruit and foliage of hollies. The berries, ranging from a soft yuletide yellow to a Rudolph's nose red, and the spiny, evergreen foliage provide a classic look to the landscape. Whether decked in halls as a series of boughs, outside your window or in front of your house, hollies can provide year-round interest in the landscape.

Hollies are a tree and shrub species that belong to the genus *Ilex*. Species and cultivars within the *Ilex* genus vary in terms of plant size/form, leaf shape and fruit color, offering a wide palate to paint the landscape with. In general, hollies have a smooth, silver bark, spiny evergreen leaves, and clusters of berries, however, the morphology can vary dramatically. While hollies are certainly renowned for these features, you won't find them on a list of plants with showy flowers.



Ilex opaca—the classic American Holly is a perfect fit for the season.

While the inconspicuous flowers are an afterthought when planting hollies, the fruit they bear are typically the main attraction and for that reason planning around holly flowers is crucial. In order to produce fruit, the female part of a flower needs to be fertilized by the male part of the flower.

Many ornamental plants have both the male and female flower parts on the same plant, allowing fruit set to be borne from self-fertilization. These plants are known as monoecious plants. Hollies, on the other hand, are dioecious. This means that male and female flowers are on separate plants, thus necessitating both being present for flowers to form. This is important, as only the female plants will produce berries. The ratio of male to female hollies needed for showy fruit set varies between species and cultivars, with recommendations for the quintessential Christmas holly—the evergreen American holly (*Ilex opaca*)—being approximately one male per three female plants, and the less-common deciduous winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) being approximately one male per five to 10 female plants.

Consider the placement of the male and female plants in the landscape. “Hiding” the male plants behind the showy, prominent female plants keeps them out of sight while still capable of pollinating the fruit-bearing female plants. While balancing the ratio of male and female hollies in the landscape is critical to fruit set for many species within the *Ilex* genus, the Burford Holly (*Ilex cornuta Burfordii*) is exempt from this consideration, as the individual plant is able to produce fruit without a pollinator, a phenomena known as parthenocarpy.



Ilex cassine—Dahoon holly is one of my favorites with its heavy fruit set.

Looking for a classic, red berried holly for the season? Try American holly (*Ilex opaca*). Looking to brighten up the landscape with some yellow berries? Consider using Anna's Choice Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*). Perhaps unique foliage is what you seek in a holly? In that case, a Golden Oakland Holly (*Ilex* hybrid Magden) can be used to excite the landscape with the golden variegated leaves.

Dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*) is another favorite with its prolific fruit set garnering attention. If the architecture/form of the plant is the desired trait, then *Ilex vomitoria* Kathy Ann stands out.

Some of the most common tree-form hollies in Louisiana are the Savannah (*Ilex* x Savannah) and Eagleston (*Ilex* x *attenuata* Eagleston), a natural hybrid of Doohan and American Holly. These cultivars are females, so they'll always produce the desirable red berries, as long as there are male hollies nearby.

These are just a few of the many hollies available, with numerous cultivars with different fruit, foliage, form and flower characteristics often found within each species. With all of the options for hollies at your disposal, designing a unique landscape using a variety of species within this genus can be achieved.

As we jump into the Christmas season, I wish you and your family a very happy "Holly Days."

Think big,



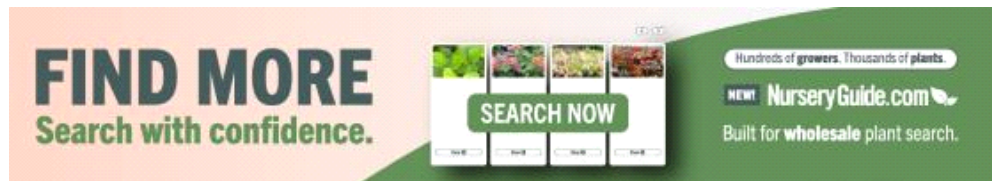
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Editor-at-Large

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