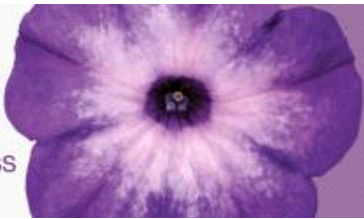


NewGen at PWCC, what Pinners are planning, College Gardens and a retailer passing

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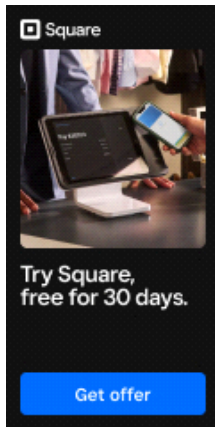
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Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Spring Meadow, Saunders & NewGen
What Pinners Are Planning
Hard for Retailers to Plan
Plan Your Scholarship Applications
College Days
What Caught JP's Eye
Phil Lukas Passes

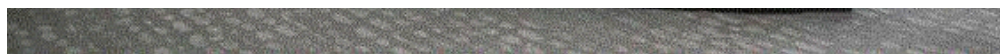


Spring Meadow, Saunders Partner on NewGen

There's a new series of boxwoods in Spring Meadow Nursery's Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs line, thanks to a partnership with Saunders Brothers, creators of Saunders Genetics and the NewGen line of boxwood blight- and leafminer-resistant boxwoods.

Saunders Genetics of Virginia introduced NewGen Boxwood in 2018 after years of testing for blight and leafminer resistance in the Mid-Atlantic region. The folks at Spring Meadow felt this line of boxwoods with its resistances and great landscape performance was a natural fit for their ColorChoice collection.





“NewGen boxwood aligns perfectly with the Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs commitment to offering superior woody plant varieties that outperform conventional selections,” said Jeremy Deppe, Spring Meadow’s general manager. “The fact that NewGen boxwood comes from a family-owned nursery with the legacy and history of Saunders Brothers makes this partnership even more exciting.”

“We are happy to offer NewGen boxwood as part of the Proven Winners ColorChoice brand,” said Bennett Saunders, General Manager of Saunders Genetics. “Our longstanding relationship with Spring Meadow has shown that we share key values—especially a strong commitment to bringing innovative, solution-oriented plants to the industry.”

The strategic partnership ensures seamless access to NewGen boxwood cultivars will be available through the existing network of Spring Meadow Nursery growers as well as NewGen’s licensed growers. The first three varieties to be added to the Proven Winners ColorChoice line will be:

NewGen Independence, with growth similar to Green Beauty but with better boxwood leafminer resistance and good resistance to boxwood blight. It is hardy to Zones 5b-8, and grows to 3 ft. tall/wide at maturity.

NewGen Freedom, which has slightly faster growth, with good resistance to boxwood blight and boxwood leafminer. Hardy to Zones 5-8, and grows to 3.5 ft. tall/wide at maturity.

The extremely shade tolerant **NewGen Liberty Belle**, with superior resistance to boxwood blight and good resistance to boxwood leafminer. Hardy to Zones 5b-8, and grows to 1.5 ft. tall/3 ft. wide at maturity.

If you retailers have NewGen boxwood currently in stock, you’ll continue to sell through your existing inventory, and you’ll eventually transition to the Proven Winners ColorChoice NewGen Boxwood in the classic, very recognizable white Proven Winners ColorChoice containers. If you want more information about the partnership, they’ve prepared a comprehensive FAQ [HERE](#).



What Pinners Are Planning

Speaking of things you’d plant in your landscape, my friend Gail over at National Garden Bureau sent over the search terms their Pinterest followers are using this week. (Just a reminder that Pinterest users are planners, so if they are searching for something last or this week, they are likely planning on purchasing it in several weeks.) Gail was able to find the search terms that use two keywords—“landscape” and “garden.”

Let’s look at the “landscape” keyword first. If you look at the yearly change for that term, it has dropped by around 20-30% in nine of the top 11 search terms—and by 70% when folks are searching for “front of house landscape ideas.” That one surprises me. But look closely and you’ll see that the search for “landscape design ideas” has seen the largest year-over-year change—it’s up 400%. That’s significant when pretty much all others are down.

Keywords		Weekly change	Monthly change	↓ Yearly change
 front of house landscape ideas		1%	200%	-70%
 landscape design ideas		10%	200%	400%
 front lawn landscape ideas		5%	200%	20%
 edging landscape		9%	200%	-20%
 landscape edging ideas		4%	200%	-20%
 landscape border ideas		5%	100%	-20%
 rose bushes landscape		9%	100%	-30%
 japanese maple tree landscape		30%	100%	-30%
 low maintenance landscape ideas		-30%	100%	-20%
 dry creek bed landscape		6%	80%	-30%
 landscape ideas front yard		1%	80%	-20%

But looking at the largest monthly increases in the search term including the “landscape” keyword it’s a four-way tie between “front of house landscape ideas,” “landscape design ideas,” “front lawn landscape ideas,” and “edging landscape.” That tells me somehow April 2024 there was a boom in folks wanting to spiffy up their “front of house” and that’s why the year-over-year dropped dramatically. The largest weekly change in “landscape” keyword terms was in “Japanese maple tree landscape.” How’s your stock of Japanese maples? You may see a rush on them.

Onto the “garden” keyword in search terms.

Keywords		Weekly change	Monthly change	↓ Yearly change
 garden decoration ideas		4%	300%	300%
 best garden layout		30%	200%	40%
 spring garden party		20%	200%	50%
 hosta gardens		20%	200%	-50%
 small vegetable gardens		40%	200%	100%
 rock garden ideas		10%	200%	-40%
 garden border ideas		20%	100%	-10%
 patio garden ideas		0%	100%	-10%
 garden edging ideas		10%	100%	-10%
 perennial garden ideas		9%	100%	-20%
 retaining wall garden		4%	100%	-20%

It's not surprising that searches for the term "small vegetable gardens" increased the most over the last week—by 40%—as it's that perfect time of year to get that veg plot going. As for the biggest search term change over the last month, "garden decoration ideas" increased the most (300%). Seems a very general term. Of the 11 search terms including the keyword "garden," six include the word "ideas." What's that tell you? People are looking for not just ideas, but for inspiration. What are you doing to inspire your customers?

Oh! I nearly forgot! A few weeks ago, I mentioned the powers that be at Pinterest were going to start indicating that AI-generated photos were in fact AI-generated. You can see the shaded "AI" up in the lefthand corner in the following photo.



My brother, who loves to play in his yard and propagate everything, has been fooled by some of these AI-generated plants he has seen on social media. I'm glad Pinterest has taken this step.

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Hard for Retailers to Plan

For distributors and retailers, planning is a difficult thing nowadays thanks to the ever-changing tariff situation. As bad as a rainy weekend? At least meteorologists have a long-range weather forecast. The ups and downs have led some to try to still the waters a bit by implementing surcharges. I've received more than one email that essentially shares the same strategy as the one Regency has taken. Here's Regency's recent message to customers:

Dear Valued Customer,

Regency, to date, has held off applying a tariff surcharge, even though we have received many shipments impacted by the tariff of the day. Our team has worked tirelessly to mitigate the full tariff burden for our business partners, only to have those tariffs change five times this year. To offset the sudden increase in operational costs, Regency will be applying a temporary 25% surcharge on all existing and future orders shipped from our warehouse, effective Monday, April 14, 2025.

We will continue to monitor the trade environment closely. If China tariffs remain in the triple digits during peak shipping season, or if the tariffs are significantly reduced, Regency will adjust the surcharge rate accordingly.

For our USA customers with Regency-assisted Far East container purchases, we ask for your patience as we monitor the next few weeks.

Thank you very much for your understanding.

Sincerely,

Richard H. Merhige & all of us at Regency

THIS ARTICLE from Modern Retail explains how some big retail brands are taking a different approach and are offering "tariff sales," encouraging folks to shop or stock up on items before the full brunt of the tariffs kick in and help retailers move inventory out. And they have a warning: "There's potential brand dilution that can definitely occur," one article contributor said. "If you're able to pull the trigger and create these kinds of immediate discounts, it may start to drift your brand into more of a discounter space."

In other small business-related tariff news, this week five small U.S. businesses sued the current administration, seeking to block the new tariffs imposed on foreign imports in recent weeks. You can read about that development **HERE**. For an opposite opinion about what tariffs could do for business, read about why the CEO of Restoration Hardware believes they will be competitive advantage **HERE**.

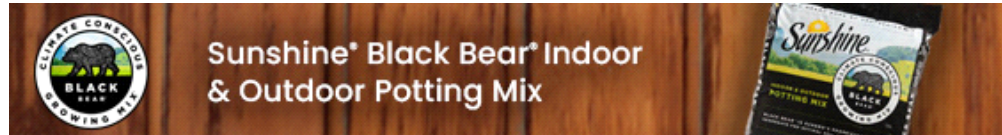
Plan Your Scholarship Applications

Back in 2023 the Sidney B. Meadows Scholarship Endowment Fund partnered with the Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) to have a common application for its scholarship program to be accessed and applied for in HRI's one central location. That was like a "peanut butter in my chocolate" idea—brilliant!

Students (and parents of students), if you head over **HERE** you will find information on applying

for not just the Sidney B. Meadows Scholarship but also the nine other scholarships that HRI administers. Only one application is required to apply to all of the scholarships for which you are eligible. One stone, up to 10 birds! You'll definitely appreciate this streamlined process.

Be sure to carefully look over the eligibility requirements for each scholarship as the details and deadlines differ between all 10. The Sidney B. Meadows Scholarship application, for instance, is due May 31. Best of luck in receiving as much funding as you can get.



College Days

Below colleague Jen Polanz reports on a garden center visit she made last month.

I recently made the drive out to central Pennsylvania to tour leafy green lettuce grower Little Leaf Farms for *Inside Grower* magazine (our CEA-focused quarterly publication). On the way, I stopped at [College Gardens](#), a garden center just a stone's throw from Penn State University in State College, Pennsylvania.

It was mid-March, so not exactly go-time for outdoor products, although they did have some beautiful pansies and a few hardy shrubs. But inside was a different story. A lush, vibrant houseplant selection, gifts and décor greeted me as I entered, along with a cozy fireplace.

I talked to Nancy DuBois, who owns the store and landscape operation with her husband, Steve, which has been in operation since 1972. I asked her about the college situation, as they are so close to Penn State (for the alumni, We Are ...!). Her answer was so interesting—about eight to 10 years ago, they wouldn't get a single student in the store. Now, she estimates about half their houseplant sales are from students.



Not only that, but the students they see are often super knowledgeable about the plants! They tend to look for rare and unusual plants they ask for by name. Sometimes Nancy doesn't even have what they're looking for, and might not get it for a while. It's an interesting progression and one to keep an eye on in your own area if you have a university or college.

What Caught JP's Eye

Continued from above.

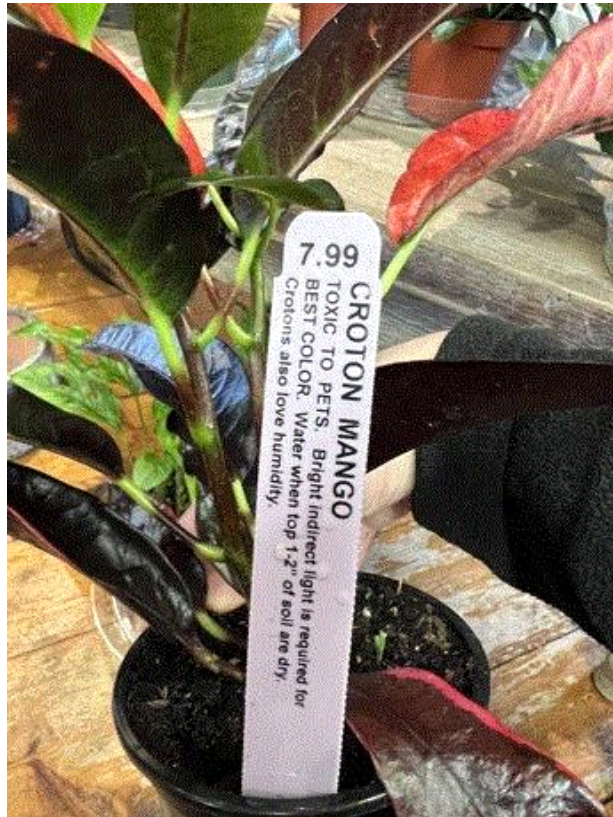
Here are a few other things I noticed as I perused their two-story location.



Downstairs there were more plant accessories and necessities, including these colorful watering cans. I loved how they displayed them, and that there were more than just two or three.



A couple of things to point out here—I love the window frames as a backdrop, and the mix of different colors, shapes and textures on display. They group plants in threes and fours in drip trays.



Each plant has a descriptive tag, including whether or not it's safe for pets—a common question from customers.



They have a list of pet-safe plants in a couple of spots around the houseplant area, too.



They found an easy way to set off products with strip LED lighting. This goes a long way to illuminating colorful products for customers.



The shop exudes coziness as soon as you walk in with this fireplace and décor. What I thought is cool is a local company is noted as the source—so College Gardens gets to enjoy the warmth and atmosphere, and Pennwood Home & Hearth gets a shoutout.

Thanks for the College Gardens visit recap! You're right, that does look cozy—I bet you wanted to stay all day!

Phil Lukas Passes

Phil Lukas, president of [Lukas Nursery & Butterfly Encounter](#) in Oviedo, Florida, passed away March 28. His passion for plants was inspired by at least two previous generations of farm-minded Lukas' in the "Slavia" area of the state. Phil joined the family nursery and garden shop in 1977, and his acumen for marketing and instinct for making people happy made the nursery a must-see gardening destination in the state. In fact, Lukas Nursery is one of Bossman Beytes' favorite places to shop now that he's a settled Floridian.

According to his obituary, Phil had a knack for making people fall in love with plants. He did this with his gift for writing compelling plant descriptions, weaving in history or interesting facts that would leave customers with a need to grow that plant on and find out all about it. Just the kind of person we need in this industry! In 2004, Phil launched the Butterfly Encounter at the Nursery, along with environmental educational program for children and adults. "What a way to make a positive and lasting impact on the world!" [his memorial said](#). I agree.

Phil leaves behind his wife, Sarah, daughter Lorin and her husband Tanner, son Lee and his wife Jessica.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, etc., drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor-at-Large

Green Profit

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