

The Rise of Infertile Grasses, Improving Profits & 2026 Trends



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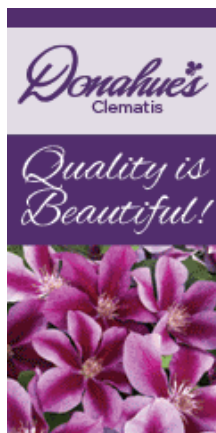
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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Rise of Infertile Grasses
Benefits of Sterile Grasses
Infertile Grasses from ECG
Improving Profits
Trends for 2026
Biobest's Side Effects App



The Rise of Infertile Ornamental Grasses

I was recently reminded of the negative impact many fertile ornamental grasses have in the landscape on a recent trip to Virginia.



As you can see, there are numerous seedlings of *Chasmanthium latifolium* (sea oats) growing in the landscape having a negative effect on the growth of some of the perennials in the planting, as well as the overall aesthetic appearance of the landscape bed.

I can't say that I was surprised by the numerous chasmanthium seedlings growing near the original sea oats plants, but it did serve as a reminder of how some fertile ornamental grasses usually live up to their self-seeding tendencies. *Miscanthus* is probably the genus of ornamental grasses that's received the worst reputation, and has been often abandoned by growers and landscapers alike.

There's been a lot of work in recent years developing and selecting infertile and/or completely sterile ornamental grasses. However, the adoption of these newer grasses has been slower than expected in many cases. This goes to show how a negative stigma can be difficult to overcome.



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 **GRIFFIN**



Benefits of Sterile Grasses

Before I share several examples of sterile/infertile grasses, let's take a look at why fertile grasses have become problematic and how new selections are helping to overcome these issues.

As I've implied, the self-seeding tendencies of some fertile grasses such as *Miscanthus sacchariflorus* have resulted in many of them being classified as invasive species in several states. As you can imagine, once this occurred, all species and cultivars in these genera rightfully (or in some cases wrongfully) also received a bad rap.



Panicum virgatum Totem Pole

Cultivars that were either completely sterile or infertile were developed over time. However, these sterile grasses have been slow to catch on and overcome the negative perception of their predecessors.

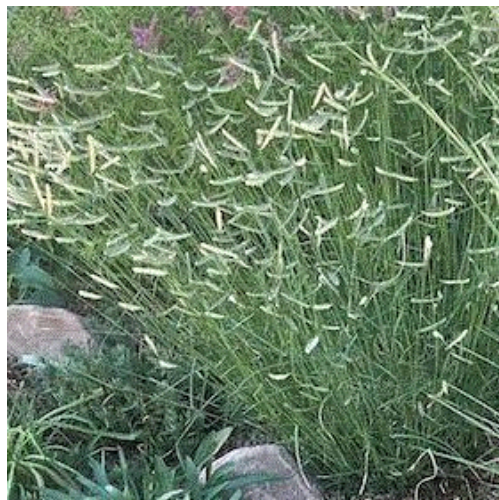
With so many beautiful, graceful grasses and the attributes they offer, I think it's important to remind ourselves that new infertile grasses are out there and should be more widely used. Besides not producing fertile seeds, sterile grasses offer several advantages. Since they aren't putting energy into seed production, they're usually more vigorous, flower earlier and produce flowers for a longer time.



Infertile Grasses from Emerald Coast

Bouteloua x Zig Zag

Miscanthus sinensis Bandwidth



Zig Zag is a sterile, warm-season Blue Grama Grass with seed heads forming a distinctive zig-zag pattern in the summer. Stays compact (18 in.), offering drought tolerance, striking texture, graceful movement and year-round interest. Hardy to Zone 3.



Bandwidth is a striking, infertile, warm-season grass with numerous broad gold bands on its rich green blades. It grows to approximately 3-ft. tall at maturity. This striking ornamental grass is hardy to Zone 5.

Miscanthus sinensis* var. *condensatus
Cabaret



If you're looking for an impressive, tall variegated ornamental grass, Cabaret is a good candidate. This infertile maiden grass grows 9-ft. tall and has ultra-wide blades with creamy white centers and dark green margins. Hardy to Zone 5.

***Miscanthus sinensis* Scout**



Scout is a newer cultivar to reach the market. With its slender, rich green blades with white midribs, it has a similar form as the widely grown Gracillimus. Scout is infertile, grows 6-ft. tall and tops itself with pink to beige flower plumes in the late summer. Hardy to Zone 5.

***Pennisetum alopecuroides* Cayenne**

***Pennisetum alopecuroides* Praline**



Cayenne is an amazing sterile fountain grass recently introduced from the University of Georgia. It has big, dark red bottlebrush plumes rising above mounds of rich green arching blades. Flowering begins in the mid-summer and continues through fall. Cayenne grows 3-ft. tall and up to 6-ft. wide, making impressive season-long displays in the landscape. Hardy to Zone 5.

Praline is a great selection of sterile fountain grass for smaller garden spaces. It grows to around 18-in. tall and produces soft taupe seedheads above tidy mounds of arching foliage. Flowering begins in the summer and continues well into the fall. This appealing fountain grass is cold hardy to Zone 5.

Learn more about these grasses and everything Emerald Coast Growers has to offer by visiting ecgrowers.com.



Improving Profits

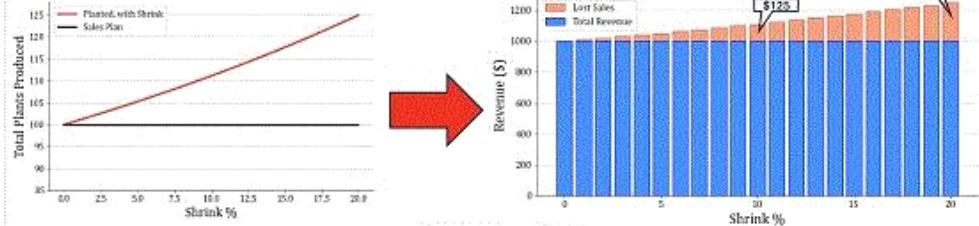
Many of us are fortunate to be in an industry we love. Many business owners can also say the same, but unlike the perspectives of most individuals, businesses are in the industry to make money. Some businesses have a good grasp on their finances (costs, labor, expenses, profits, etc.), while others don't.

Wherever your business falls in its financial aptitude, my colleague Bill Calkins, editor of the *Tech On Demand* enewsletter, recently covered the topic of profitability. Bill shared several resources (video, presentation and numerous articles) for businesses to learn how to understand their costs and improve their profitability. Here's Bill's piece, including all of the resource links he provided:

Grower Math: How Cost Accounting Boosts Profitability

Cost accounting is the process of calculating your fixed and variable costs of production and identifying on what products and activities you're spending your resources. It may not be glamorous, but taking the time for cost accounting can dramatically improve your business' profitability.

Shrink is Costly!



Sell Price: \$10

Shrink: 20%

Expected Lost Total Revenue: (\$10 * 125 plants) * 20% = \$250

Average Shrink Opportunity Cost: \$250 / 125 plants = \$2

Total Shrink Opportunity Cost: \$250 (\$2 per plant)

Ball Seed's Senior Business Analyst Stephen Steiner joined me for a quick crash course in "grower math." Stephen discussed simple ways to calculate costs (fixed and variable) by sharing greenhouse production-based examples. Knowing the true cost to produce various inputs will help you and your team make the smartest—and most profitable—decisions.

WATCH THE VIDEO!

This discussion is actually a condensed version of a much more in-depth presentation Stephen and Ball Seed's Senior Commercial Director Jim Kennedy have shared at events over the past couple of years. The response is always excellent, and many growers have commented about how much this relatively simple approach to what can be complex and intimidating has helped their team plan for profit. You can find the full deck [HERE](#).

Stephen also recommends a series of *GrowerTalks*' articles written by business columnist Bill Swanekamp digging deeper into greenhouse cost accounting from many angles. You can find all of the articles and more resources [HERE](#).

Trends to Watch in 2026

The American Floral Endowment (AFE) is hosting a webinar you surely don't want to miss. You can join [AFE's Grow Pro Webinar series](#) at 1:00 p.m. Eastern on October 14, 2025 as Dr. Charlie Hall of Texas A&M and Dr. Melinda Kluth of North Carolina State discuss "Trends to Watch in 2026." This webinar is geared to help growers stay ahead of the curve in 2026. Attendees can expect to learn:

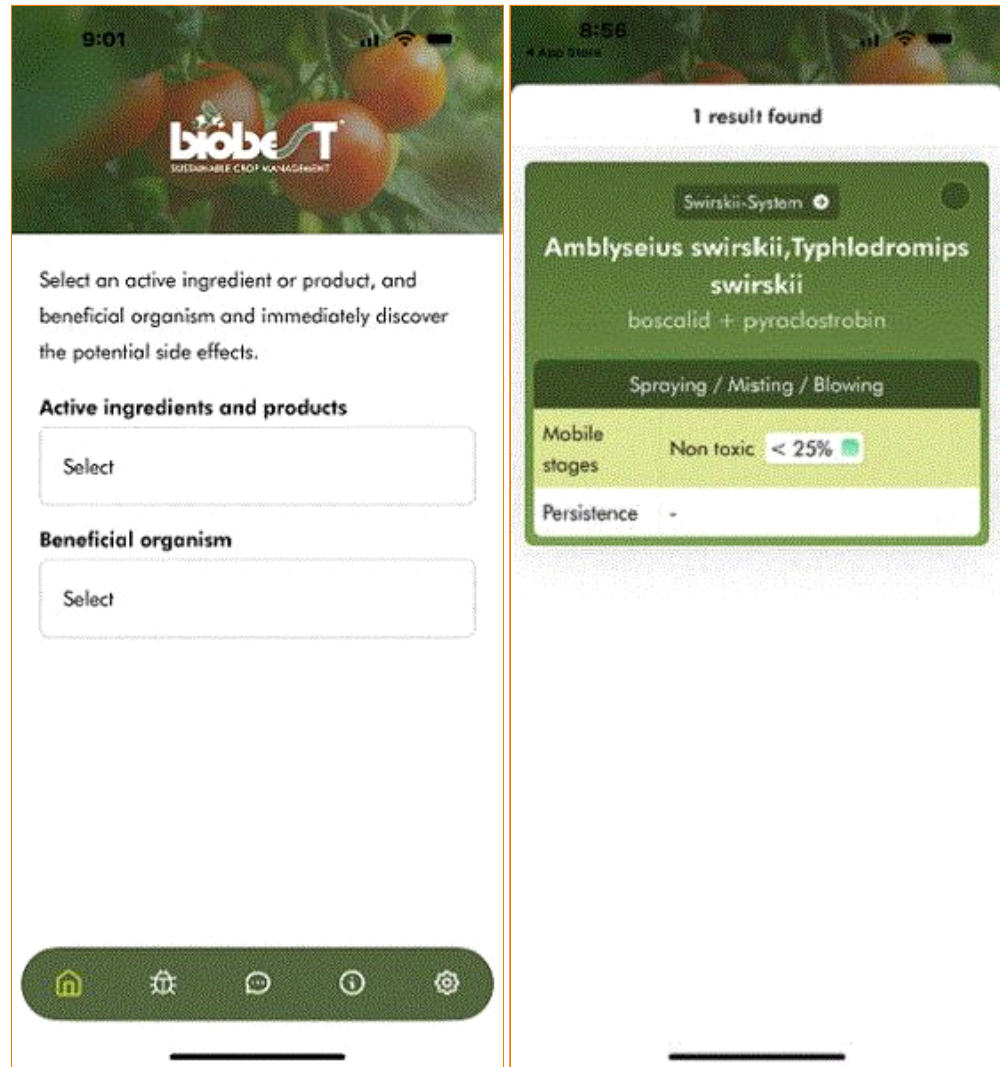
- Economic predictions
- Industry-specific trends
- Outlook for greenhouse crops
- Consumer preferences
- Marketing strategies

Date & Time: October 14, 2025 1:00 p.m. Eastern

Webinar Info & Registration: [Trends to Watch in 2026](#)

Biobest's Side Effects App

Biobest recently updated its [Side Effects App](#). If you're not already familiar with it, I'll briefly describe it for you. The Side Effects app is a powerful tool built to assist growers with their pesticide decisions while protecting beneficial organisms (BCAs) they're also using to manage pests in their production systems.



Simply select the active ingredient of a product (insecticide, fungicide, growth regulator or biological) and the beneficial organism you're aiming to protect and the app will quickly provide up-to-date results showing the potential side effects (danger or safety) to the BCA.

The Side Effects App can be used anywhere—even if you're offline—and the results can be shared via email or messaging.

If you use BCAs, Biobest's Side Effects app is an essential tool for your business. And no need to worry about the cost because it's FREE!

Tap the buttons below to get the app.



My email is ppilon@ballpublishing.com if you have any comments, article suggestions or if you'd just like to say hello.

Best regards,

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

Paul Pilon

Editor-at-Large—*Perennial Pulse*

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