

Energy grants paused, best urban garden cities, wellness through plants

The **BIGGEST** and **GREENEST** industry trade show in the West.



**FARWEST**  
PORTLAND 2026

**AUGUST 26-28**      **REGISTER NOW ▶**

*A sustainable e-newsletter from GrowerTalks and Green Profit*



TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2026

subscribe

Be part of the community shaping the future of perennials.



Perennial Plant Association National Symposium July 27 - 30 East Lansing, MI



Get to the Root of It We know greenhouses!



ASHS Journals - HortScience, JASHS and HortTechnology

Keep up with the latest breakthroughs in horticulture and plant science research.

Get access to relevant topics for growers, educators, scientists, and industry leaders to stay ahead in the field.

Peer-reviewed, open access, digital publications.

<https://journals.ashs.org>

MISSION: BOOST YOUR INNOVATIVE SCIENCE



# greenTalks

sustainability e-news

### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Energy Grants Halted
- Top Gardening Cities
- Organic Rules Consider CO2
- Wellness Craze
- Report from the MT Outpost



## USDA Halts REAP Grants (Again)

The USDA's Rural Business Cooperative Service just released a stakeholder announcement that says the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), which has historically provided grants and loans for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, will not be making any further grant awards until a new set of regulations takes effect.

They state that they intend to "update the regulations at 7 CFR 4280 Subpart B to comply with Executive Order 14315, Ending Market Distorting Subsidies for Unreliable, Foreign-Controlled Energy Sources."

The USDA says that a new notice of funding opportunity will be posted once they're ready with the new regulations, but no timeline was provided as to when that might occur. Applicants who previously submitted a grant application will have the opportunity to reapply. REAP Guaranteed Loans will continue to be awarded during this time.

Learn more [HERE](#).



## Best Cities for Urban Gardening

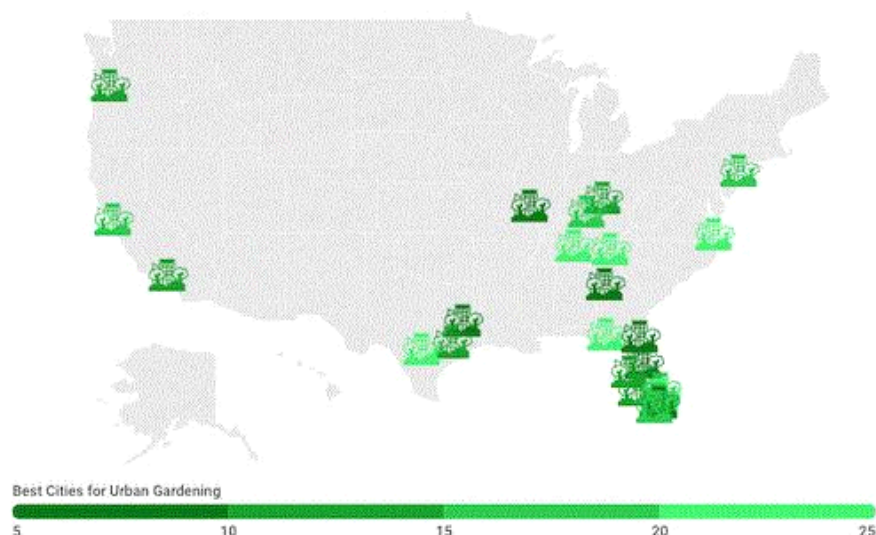
LawnStarter just released their rankings for Best Cities for Urban Gardening, and the big change this year was that Atlanta moved into the No. 1 spot, while last year's top-ranked city of New

York slid to 13th. The Sunshine State, as you might expect, put all 39 of its ranked cities into the top 100. Austin, which was 10th overall, had the highest “interest in gardening” score.

**Top 10 Overall:**

1. Atlanta, Georgia
2. Miami, Florida
3. Houston, Texas
4. St Louis, Missouri
5. Jacksonville, Florida
6. Orlando, Florida
7. Cincinnati, Ohio
8. Fort Myers, Florida
9. Tampa, Florida
10. Austin, Texas

## 25 Best Cities For Urban Gardening



These are weighted rankings that look at a city’s access to community gardens, average yard size, growing season stats (such as growing days, precip, sun), the number of garden centers and other supply stores, and how the locale ranks in terms of garden clubs, laws, and internet searches for gardening terms. They even took into account which states have a Right to Garden law (Florida, Illinois, and Maine) that prevents local governments (including HOAs) from fining homeowners for starting vegetable gardens.

I figured this audience might be interested in the rankings for supplies—which looked at the number of nurseries and supply stores, gardening stores, and landscaping equipment and supply stores.

**Top 10 Cities for Supplies**

1. Houston, Texas
2. Miami, Florida
3. Jacksonville, Florida
4. San Antonio, Texas
5. Orlando, Florida
6. Phoenix, Arizona
7. Los Angeles, California
8. Dallas, Texas
9. New York, New York
10. Charlotte, North Carolina



## Proposal: CO2 Use in Organic Production

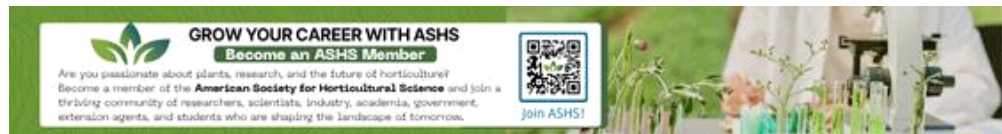
Organic greenhouse growers may have a new tool at their disposal: CO2.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing rule changes to its organic regulations, one of which would allow the use of synthetic carbon dioxide in organic crop production.

The new rule, if approved, will add carbon dioxide to the National List as a synthetic substance allowed for use in organic crop production to adjust the pH of irrigation water and for atmospheric adjustment in indoor crop production environments. While synthetic carbon dioxide has been allowed in post-production food handling, the rule changes expands its use to crop production and water management. The NOSB recommended only allowing it when sourced as a byproduct (which is typically how it is sourced anyhow).

Other organic rulemaking changes up for discussion include using meloxicam as a pain treatment in organic livestock production, changing restrictions on the use of methionine in poultry feed, and affirming the use of sodium nitrate as a fertilizer in organic production (with certain conditions to protect soil quality). The listing for sodium nitrate is currently expired and needed to be renewed.

So, all that said: The next step is public comments on this, which will be accepted until May 22, 2026. To submit a comment, head over to the [Federal Register notice](#) on the proposed rule changes. You'll also find a full explanation of each rule change, along with the NOSB's findings and recommendations that led to the proposed rules.



## The Wellness Craze & Connecting it to Plants

While there's been a long tradition of horticultural professionals raving about the benefits of gardening and plants, I'm hearing a lot of buzz on the topic in the media right now.

My colleague Ellen Wells has brought this topic up a few times recently in her *BuZZ!* e-newsletter, most recently this article: ["A connection to nature fuels well-being worldwide, according to a study of 38,000 people."](#) Research says that those who have a stronger sense of nature connectedness have a higher degree of mindfulness. And that, dear readers, often leads to better mental health and happiness.



At the industry level, a floral marketing association called That Flower Feeling, is expanding its [Just Add Flowers](#) campaign to specifically address “modern motherhood burnout” by positioning flowers as a functional essential for mindfulness. They’re touting flowers as one of the simplest—and most effective—forms of self-care. Flowers are a simple, accessible and immediate mood booster. With this campaign, they’re planning a [Mother’s Day message](#) that touts the long-term wellness benefits of flowers.

### Report from the MT Outpost



At the Outpost, the aspens leafed out 36 days earlier than last year. Early April gardening was not on my list, but it felt pretty great to get out there in the sun this weekend and clean out the garden beds with the creek rushing in the background. Did I feel more present and connected to the outdoors afterwards? Yes. (But also a little pissed at whoever munched the roots and killed two cotoneasters this winter.)

Afterwards, I headed over to our [rental cabin](#) to meet with a potential cleaner who has worked on luxury guest ranches for most of her life, and we had a long conversation about how much people are willing to pay for the experience of unplugging and spending a week amongst the trees and mountains—all in the name of being present and mindful for a short while. While our little cabin isn't quite the same audience as a luxury guest ranch, I'm seeing the same thing: People craving the simple activities that help them slow down. Guests who say, after a long weekend playing board games and hiking with their family, that, "This was exactly what we needed." Because they were present. As I contemplate adding an outdoor sauna to our amenity list, it's with that idea of presence in mind.

You can call it a wellness trend, but in simpler terms, I think folks are looking for ways to feel calm in a frenzied world. These things—plants, gardens, nature, quality time with other humans—ground us. Sometimes they even save us.

Until next time,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer".

*Jennifer Duffield White*

[jwhite@ballpublishing.com](mailto:jwhite@ballpublishing.com)

**This email received by 26,888 loyal readers!**

Want to be one of the lucky sponsors who reach those readers of *GreenTalks*? Drop **Paul Black** a line and he'll tell you what a bargain it is!

**GreenTalks® is a registered trademark of Ball Horticultural Company in the U.S.**