

# My Latest Podcast; April 18-19; Fun Stuff at D.S. Cole



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DUMMEN ORANGE



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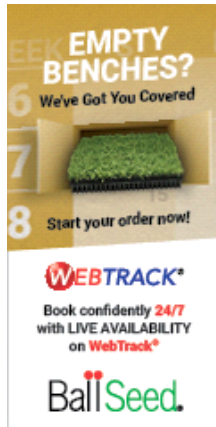


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### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

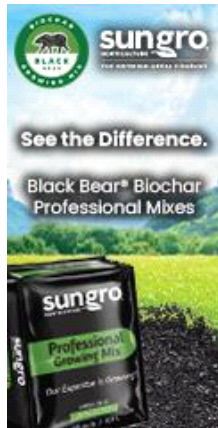
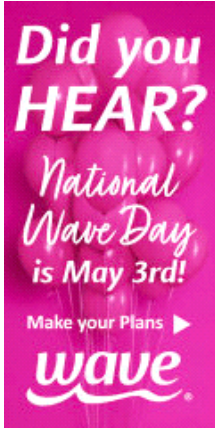
Podcast with TWO YGA winners!  
How was last weekend?  
- What are folks buying?  
- Your comments  
What's new at D.S. Cole?  
Finally ...



**NEW FOR 2027**

**PW**  
PROVEN WINNERS

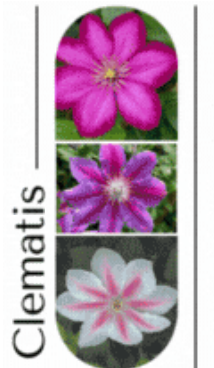
**My latest podcast features TWO YGA winners**



Join me for a fun discussion with not one, but TWO, Young Grower Award winners as we meet Mike Merida, the 2009 Young Grower Award winner, and Matthew Tyson, who won in 2023. Why interview them together? Both work for Costa Farms in Florida, both are UF graduates (like me) and one even went to my high school (although in a different century ... heck, a different millennium!).



Hear why they think they both won the YGA award quite early in their careers and why they've devoted those careers to Costa Farms.



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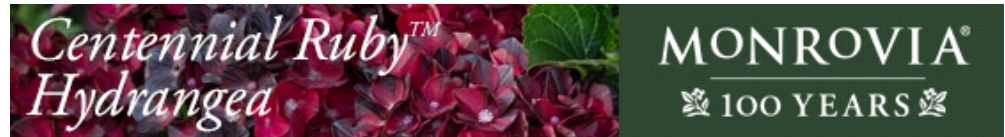
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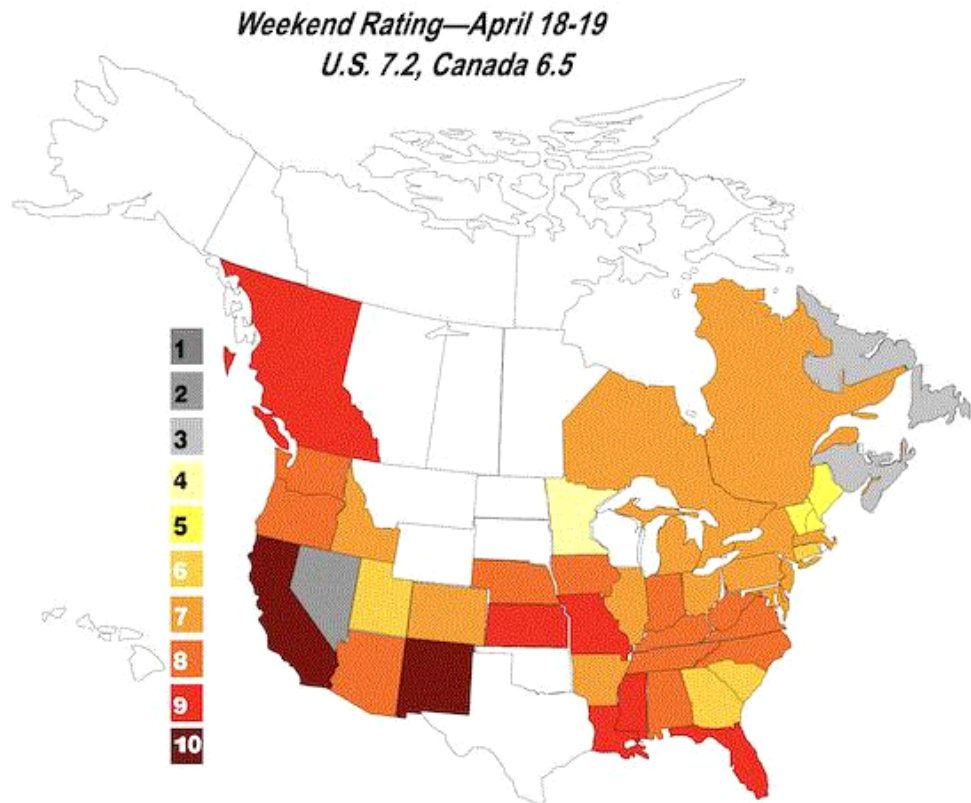


## How was April 18-19? Dead on average—or so you tell me

The scores are in for the third week of April 2026 and they aren't overwhelming ... but they're not terrible, either. Sounds pretty average, eh? That's just what they are, with the **U.S. scoring 7.2** and **Canada scoring 6.5**. Compare that to the 13-year average for the weekend of 7.2/6.4. Amazingly consistent! This weekend last year, which was Easter weekend, scored 7.6/5.7—better in the U.S., but worse in Canada.

We saw a slight slowdown in the U.S. compared to the start of April, but there was some cooling of the weather (including snow in New England), and some low scores coming in from areas that previously had been sending no scores because they weren't yet open, indicating the season is finally getting rolling.

Here's the map:



That's based on 76 scores from 39 states and six provinces.

It wasn't a week for superlatives—you sent in just seven 10s total (9%). But 14 of you (18%) rated it as 9, so, really, that's not bad—more than a quarter of you ranked the weekend as excellent. As you'd expect, those high scores came from the South and East, but also a few from the Plains and the Pacific Northwest. Northern spots that heated up early like New York and



Pennsylvania have cooled slightly, while folks in the deep south are afraid the good times are about to end (although the weekend weather report for Montgomery, Alabama, looks favorable—81F Saturday (50% chance of rain) and 85F Sunday (24% chance). So perhaps the fun continues!

Here are your regional scores:

Plains	8.1
South	7.8
Northwest	7.6
West	7.5
East	7.1
Midwest	6.9
Mountains	6.5
New England	5.9

All in all, things still look good for Spring '26 in spite of headwinds like high gas prices.



## What are folks buying?

Abe VanWingerden of Metrolina Greenhouses generously sends in carefully calculated scores from 16 South, East and Midwest states, based on comps vs. last year (which was an Easter weekend, so he was up against strong comps). His total average score for 16 states was 7.0, ranging from a high of 9 in Ohio (comped up 18%) to a low of 5 in New York and Alabama (down 21% and 24%, respectively).

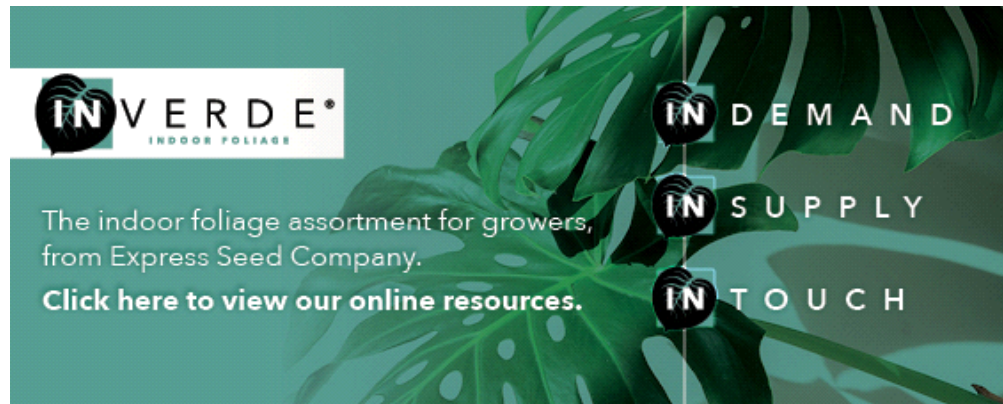
But in addition to scores, Abe offered this bit of marketplace intelligence that I think you'll appreciate:

“Consumers are definitely leaning to opening price points within segments. Not basics only—this is not a trade down to seed items or anything like that—but they are just looking for value. If they want a container, they don't buy packs, but they do buy a \$10 to \$15 container vs. a \$25 to \$30 bigger container they bought last year. If they want a Proven Winner hanging basket, the 1.5G Size (10 in.) seems to have more affinity this year than the 2.5G size (14 in.). People are staying with their preferred varieties and brands, but leaning more toward the smaller sizes of that item. Might be a case of “I wanna watch it grow,” but probably more of an economics decision.

“But, either way, the week was still solid, and while the +80% COMPs don't happen every week, the season is still very strong with +13% YTD growth so far rolling into the best and most important 30 to 45 days of the year.”

Thanks, Abe!

Are you seeing a similar trend at your business—folks going for smaller sizes of the same products? Or are they springing for the big, expensive stuff just as readily as in years past? Let me know [HERE](#).



## Some more comments

Scores are great, but what's really telling is what you tell me about those scores. Here's a random sample in random order:

**Long Island, New York (8).** "Saturday plant sales were phenomenal. Perennials were through the roof, best April perennial sales going all the way back to COVID years. Sales were on par with May. Top quality is our best offense and defense."—*Sig Fiele, Atlantic Nursery*

**Connecticut (5).** "Spring in New England ... what a difference from one weekend to the next. Cold and wet was the theme, and the action reflected that. Lucky to be up against last year's Easter. Overall not great, not terrible ... moving on."—*Chris Hallene, Casertano Farms*

**Alabama (10).** "I'll give it a 10, but it's feeling like it may be the last 10 of the season."—*Davy Wright, Wright's Nursery & Greenhouse*

**Minnesota (6).** "Open House weekend, and while we dodged the heavy rain, hail and tornados that southern Minnesota was dealing with, we had cold temps and very aggressive wind. Not an ideal start, but, hey, it's only April. Warmer days to come ... maybe?"—*Jay Holasek, Fred Holasek and Son Greenhouse*

**Virginia (10+).** "I might have been a little too excited last week with a 10 because this weekend was even better—thus the 10+! Saturday was a record day for us both in dollars and transactions! And all that was even with a freeze in the forecast!"—*Gary Garner III, Gary's Garden Center*

**Colorado (7).** "Snow on Friday—we need the moisture—but it slowed sales. Saturday and Sunday were sunny and warming. We are a month ahead due to temperatures. It will make for a very interesting spring."—*Gene Pielin, Gulley Greenhouse & Garden Center*

**Illinois (7).** "It is Monday morning and we started the day with frost. Weather is crazy in Illinois. We had lots of rain last week, flooding in many places and the weekend was only 45F, windy with some sun and clouds. It could have been better, but it wasn't a totally bad weekend at all. We are getting nice weather coming up, so we will forget about this weather soon."—*JP, Countryside Flower Shop, Nursery & Garden Center*

**Kansas (10).** "Three weeks in a row a 10! The phones are ringing and trucks are rolling!"—*Kathy Miller, Sedan Floral*

**Missouri (9).** "Pretty decent sales despite the continuing rollercoaster weather we have been having, including 13 tornado warnings in the region."—*Nancy Martin, Lilac Hill Greenhouse*



## What's new at D.S. Cole?

All sorts of stuff! Editor Jen Zurko and I just completed a quick trip to New Hampshire for a Proven Winners new variety event (more on that next time), and while in bucolic Loudon, we took the opportunity to drop in on our good friends Doug and Tucker Cole of D.S. Cole Growers. Doug is a nationally known young plant supplier and a respected regional finished-plant grower, too. He travels the world seeking cool and unusual crops, and his sophisticated Venlo greenhouse looks more like a garden center than a production facility, what with the hundreds and hundreds of small batches of interesting crops he tests and sells. Here's a little bit of what Doug and Tucker showed us during our nickel tour.

### Houseplants



Doug grows a LOT—both liners and finished—and he's always testing rare and unusual varieties that he finds on his travels. One way they're now marketing these is via online sales. This is Cassandra (right) who handles this for Doug ... and is a plant collector herself. It's not a big part of their business by any means, but who knows—we told him we know growers in Florida who are almost 100% online sales.

**A fun little test item**



Staghorn ferns attached to a piece of cedar fencing (cheap!) with burlap and string. Doug did about 120 of them just to see how they'll go.

**Combo baskets**



Inspired by the Playlist mixes from Sakata that he sees during the California Spring Trials, Doug is doing a lot of combos using varieties that don't root well together, so they have to be started separately and then combined. He's also combining vegetative and seed varieties. Some recipes come from Sakata, but many are their own.



## More from Doug & Tucker

Prefinished caladiums



Doug is experimenting with starting #2 caladium bulbs in a 32-count tray, which his customers can then drop into larger pots. Starting with a prefinished saves the customer two to three months of heating bills. Bulbs are from Bates Sons & Daughters.

#### **Blackcloth**



I haven't seen temporary hand-pulled blackcloth in years, but Doug set some up last year specifically for Sunbeckia and echinacea, which benefit from a couple weeks of short days to prevent blooming in the liner stage.

#### **Herbs**



Cole's does a big year-round herb program for a New England grocery chain, with dependable weekly shipments all year round.

#### Videos



Tucker has started making [availability videos](#) starring his dad. I've always enjoyed in-house videos like this, ever since Art Parkerson was doing them with his daughter, [Julia](#), and inventory manager [Matt Nagle](#) to promote products at Lancaster Farms. Not that Doug is as cute as Julia ... but cameos by his dog Mia (as in Ipomoea) certainly helps!

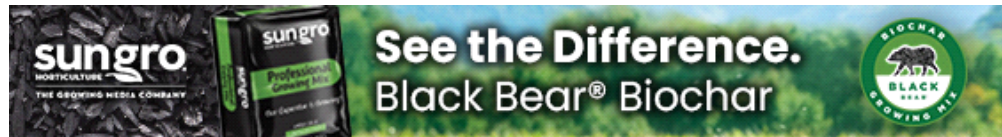
Said Doug, "It takes time to make these and edit them, but we are told that it helps sell the product."



Finally ...



Spotted in the Ball Hort parking lot. Somebody has an excellent sense of humor!



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**  
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