TPIE, 50K for 50K, Dinner with Dinosaurs & More



News and commentary for the nursery & landscape market

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Nursery & LANDSCAPE INSIDER

News and Commentary for the landscape and nursery market

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

FRA Trip
IPPS Student Winners
TIPE Education Announced
50K for 50K









I Joined the Floriculture Research Alliance!

Last week, I was in New Haven, Connecticut, enjoying much more than the weather (which was quite amazing). The Floriculture Research Alliance (FRA) is a grower-researcher partnership between several university researchers, commercial growers and allied suppliers. This program has grown over the past five years and has really turned in to a treasure trove of ideas, information and advancements from horticultural leaders.

I was excited to be invited to the group and incredibly eager to share my research with so many influential decision-makers across the country. It was also nice to have a chance to bring my students with me to meet as many people as they could. Overall, it was an incredible trip and I'm going to remember this for years.

First off, I can't express how amazing our conference center was. This isn't typically what strikes you when you think of meetings, but this facility was built in the Atlantic Ocean—literally in the harbor—and the view out the windows made it a bit difficult to pay attention. Seriously, this was the view from the conference room.



After a full day of research talks and discussions, it was off on tours. We got a chance to see two amazing operations via a very nice bus ride with friends along the way. First stop was Michael’s Greenhouse, where we were given a wonderful tour of their production facilities and some of the more innovative work they're building. The poinsettias were just starting to build color, but seeing all of them and the wonderful fall color in the countryside, I'm totally ready for fall!



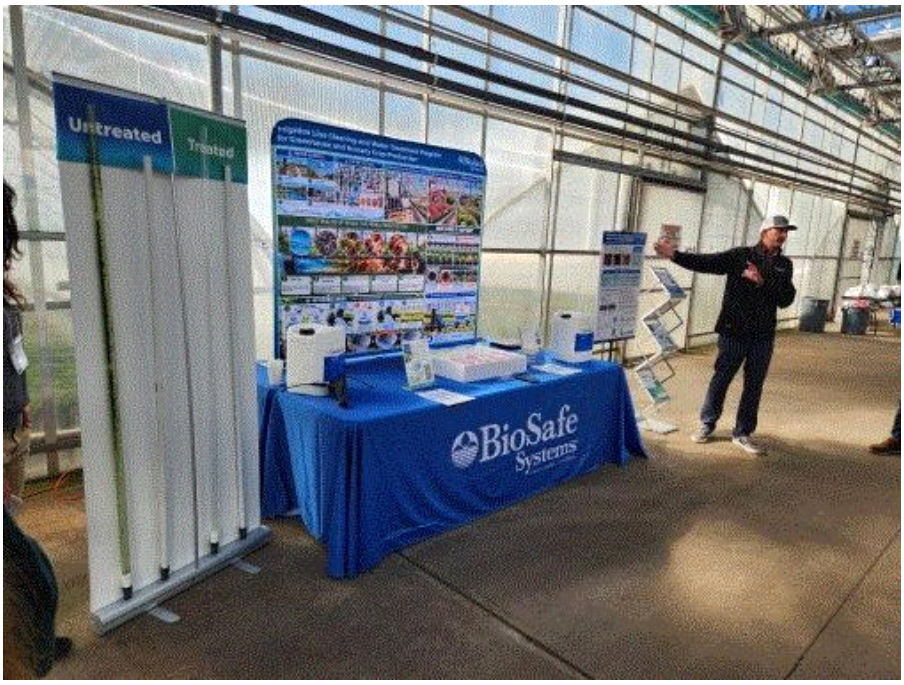
They also showed us these new digital pest scouting devices that I have to say were enticing. Anyone that knows me knows that I am 100% NOT an AI guy, but the computer monitoring systems they built have some serious practicality. These handy devices just monitor sticky cards—that’s all. When something is caught, it identifies it and sends signals so that

technicians can monitor pest presence. Really simple and neat.



We also saw some demonstrations from several allied suppliers. My friends at Profile Products and Dosatron had some very cool demonstrations on substrates and fertilizer injections. However, the demo I wanted to highlight was something I don't typically talk about: sanitation. Not because I'm super excited by sanitation (which, of course, I am), but as an extension professional I found this simple, yet neat, presentation completely effective.

My good friend Eric Smith of BioSafe Systems demonstrated how to clean pipes. Seems simple enough, but have you really ever seen the inside of your pipes? I know I haven't and showing it, which would have taken several weeks of preparation, was so impactful. The proof is in the pipes … or the plates. Yes, they even plated cultures for microbial growth in different irrigation pipes. Needless to say, we're going to clean our greenhouse irrigation system this winter.

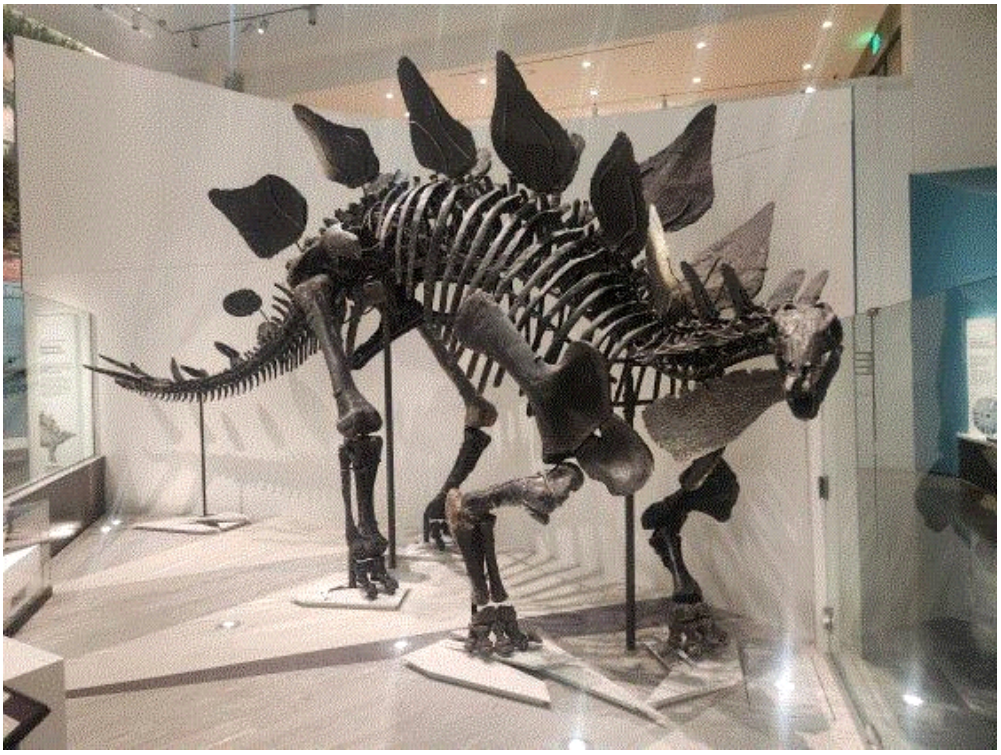


Our next stop was Prides Corner Farms, which was seriously impressive. The bus tour around the facilities gave me vibes of the true nursery spirit—there were plants everywhere. If they had 10 sq. ft. of extra space, they were using it to grow plants. I loved it!

Once we got off the bus, we had an up-close-and-personal tour of the greenhouse facilities, which really highlighted their dedication to research and advancement. They were doing work on boom technologies, grafting, pest scouting and even have their own tissue culture lab. I was especially impressed with their automated sticking lines, which were quite effective in moving plants through propagation.

They also showed more practical innovations with organizing how people stuck cuttings, moving down a non-automated cutting line. It was very eye-opening how much coordinating effective production techniques can impact overall output.

After getting back into town, it was time for my favorite part of the agenda: "Dinner With Dinosaurs." Seriously, when I saw this on the agenda a few weeks in advance I was jazzed. What could be cooler than eating in a Natural History Museum and in the dinosaur section of all places? I'm truly a kid at heart and love to read about dinosaurs. I might have nerded out a bit too much there, but who wouldn't?



After dinner, we were treated to even more. In the event hall, with dinosaur skeletons hanging from the ceiling, we had our keynote talk from everybody's favorite economist, Dr. Charlie Hall. Charlie talked about the current state of our industry, where we've come from and where we're going. He did it with a fun dinosaur theme to bring the entire evening together.

I highlighted this note: "Think in geological time: The long game beats the short-run noise." It's clear that while things might be slowing, we should still stick to what works and make it through the short-term lulls. Overall, this was an incredible trip, with research, tours, friends and … dinosaurs! Really—if you want me to come somewhere, host it in the dinosaur museum. I'm very much looking forward to next year.





IPPS Student Competition Winners

While I was hanging out with plant people in dinosaur world, I sent some of my students to Houston, Texas, to participate in the the IPPS Southern Region Conference. This was a really tough choice and I hated that both of these meetings were on the same week. Unfortunately, I had to choose.

I'll have a better write-up from my IPPS correspondents in the next issue, but I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate the four students who got up and presented their research in front of the intimidating crowd of IPPS growers. I know this is an exciting and nerve-racking opportunity, and while I'm sad I missed these presentations, I know they were amazing.

Congratulations to this year’s winners!

- Ashley Jackson—University of Florida
- Maria Rodriguez—University of Florida
- Anna Cleckler—Auburn University
- Morgan O’Neill—Auburn University



VIBRANT

PW PROVEN WINNERS

TPIE Announces Knowledge College Lineup

The Florida Nursery Growers & Landscape Association has announced their educational sessions for the Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE). This year there will be 17 sessions, split across three unique tracks: Business Strategies, Garden Center and Interiorscape. These are also accompanied by two half-day workshops. This is education like nowhere else in the U.S. fully dedicated to a massively popular and growing sector of our industry.

The Business Strategies track is headlined by Jeff Ruby, owner of RedRock Leadership, who'll lead a 90-minute session on "Three Disciplines of a Trusted Sales Advisor." The Garden Center track will feature Joey Bokor, a second-generation nurseryman discussing "Beyond Plants: Creating Garden Center Experiences Customers Remember."

Finally, the Interiorscape track is highlighted by Vicky Cate, a Plantscape Industry Hall of Fame inductee, talking about "The Interiorscape Technicians Playbook: Tools for Success in the Field." I can’t wait. By the way, I’ll be there, with a session on new and effective substrate strategies for indoor plants.

I’m extra excited for this show, as it'll be my first time at TPIE. I’ve known about this show for years, but always had something preventing me from making it down to Ft. Lauderdale. Well, not this year—I'll be there for the full show and excited to hit the floor to check out all the cool tropical plants and vendors working with the tropicals industry. Make sure to register so you can come down and see all the excitement with me.



Grow 50K for 50K for Seed Your Future

A few weeks ago, I shared some inspirational stories from industry leaders on Seed Your Future, a national movement dedicated to inspiring the next generation of plant professionals. Well, Seed Your Future is launching a fundraising campaign and I'm happy to share it. "50K to Grow 50K" is a campaign aimed to amass $50,000 by the end of the year that will expose at least 50,000 young people to our industry and help them discover career opportunities in horticulture.

“Students can’t pursue careers they don’t know exist,” said Jazmin Albarran, executive director of Seed Your Future. “By helping educators bring horticulture into the classroom, we can open students’ eyes to opportunities that combine their interests with meaningful work. Every contribution helps us reach more teachers, introduce more students to the power of plants and build a stronger future for our industry.”

This is a powerful and real statement. I can attest first hand that many college and younger students don't realize horticulture is a viable path. Nationally, we see several horticultural programs shutting down, like the recent announcement of Valencia College in Orlando, Florida, shuttering its Plant Science program. If we don’t make a change and continue down this path, we may be severely limiting our future.

The money raised in this campaign will go directly to supporting classroom activities focused on horticulture. Even small donations around $10, can make a big impact. I typically don’t push fundraising messages, but sometimes I think the cause is incredibly impactful for our industry and think this is worth a share.

How Your Gift Grows

Every donation helps Seed Your Future expand access to career exploration resources and connect more educators and students with horticulture. Contributions can help support:

- $85 equips 10 teachers with career exploration tools
- $250 provides plantable career exploration papers for career fairs
- $500 impacts 2,000 students exploring horticulture careers
- $1,000 empowers more than 115 educators with career pathway resources
- $5,000 covers the cost of two high school educators attending Seed to STEM immersive program

Each teacher reached is a chance to introduce students to careers they may not encounter through traditional classroom learning. From hands-on growing and plant science to business, design and emerging technologies, horticulture offers a wide range of possibilities for the next generation.

If you're inclined to donate, you can find more information HERE.



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Jeb Fields
Editor-at-Large
Nursery & Landscape Insider

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