

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Cultivate'20 Will Be Online Instead of Live

Chris Beytes

Cultivate'20 will not be held in the Columbus Convention Center in July. Instead, AmericanHort is taking the event online and dubbing it "Cultivate'20 Virtual." That, of course, is due to the almost certain limits on large



gatherings that will be in force this summer, along with folks' hesitation or inability to travel. However, the virtual event will take place in the same time frame, starting the week of July 13 and running into the next. In fact, much of the event, most notably the educational sessions, will remain online long after the show ends.

"Although I earlier put a May 11 target on the calendar to make the Cultivate'20 go/no-go decision (60 days out seemed reasonable at the time), the events of the past several weeks have further informed the decision," said AmericanHort CEO Ken Fisher. "The public health emergency will not be adequately mitigated by July, our society won't be back to normal travel and public officials won't likely be giving the 'green light' for 10,000-person events. It's unfortunate, but based on the health risks, the right decision. I made the recommendation to our Board of Directors and they unanimously agreed that an in-person event in July was improbable."

But knowing how important Cultivate is to our industry for education, commerce and networking, Ken and his team thought, "If we can't convene in person, what's the next best option?"

The virtual version of the Cultivate event will include a 3-D digital tradeshow where exhibitors and attendees can share information, view video presentations, chat live and make connections. More than 50 live educational sessions will be offered and attendees can even go to the HRI online Garden Party, an event to socialize and show appreciation for the work of HRI supporters and researchers. The town hall will still take place virtually, and there will be roundtable discussion groups and other opportunities for online networking.

Best of all, the Expo-Only pass will be free for everyone and the All-Access Education Pass will be free to AmericanHort members and discounted for non-members.

"We've all had to learn to be innovative and adapt our business practices to this challenging environment," said Susie Raker-Zimmerman, chairwoman of the AmericanHort board of directors and vice president of Raker-Roberta's Young Plants. "I'm excited to be part of an online option that allows our industry to connect with peers and continue to maintain a sense of community."

You can find out more at cultivatevirtual.org. **GT**