

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Perennials During a Pandemic

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To borrow from the familiar phrase about lemons and lemonade, when life gives you a pandemic, you host a virtual event.

Well, maybe that saying won't become a thing, but that's the world we're living in this summer, when dozens of in-person events have had to develop a virtual alternative or cancel completely because of the COVID-19 health crisis.

Darwin Perennials Day—which is normally held the third week of June at the Ball Gardens in West Chicago, Illinois—was one of those events. Renamed as Darwin Digital Days, the one-day, in-person event became a week-long virtual affair that included educational webinars, an interactive platform for the keynote speakers and virtual tours of the perennial beds in the Gardens at Ball.

“Pulling off a digital event like this in a short amount of time has been a challenge,” admitted Leland Toering, Sales & Marketing Manager for Darwin Perennials. “At the beginning of the project, somebody on our team asked what would success look like and I said, ‘Just pulling it off!’”

But, thankfully, after a lot of work from many departments, Leland was very happy with the end result—participation for the event far exceeded their expectations.

Having to scramble to create a whole new event digitally forced them to look at the other content they could provide to their customers.

“I have a feeling that the digital aspect of holding events will not go away,” said Leland. “And I think future events will be a good mix of in-person and digital tools.”

This year, there were over 1,000 different perennial varieties featured in the Ball Gardens, along with over 50 new, so there will be lots to see when the regular Darwin Perennials Day (hopefully) happens next year. **GT**

Pictured: Ball Publishing helped out the Darwin and Kieft folks by offering our videography services for their virtual tours. Pictured are Jen Zurko and Chris Beytes following Chris Fifo around the perennial gardens with cameras in tow. And because we're still in the middle of a pandemic, with masks, too
