Wayfinding, privacy screening, alternative searching and awards applying



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Green Profit's buZZ

Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

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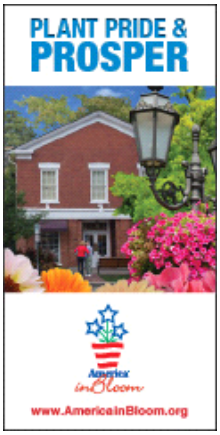
Finding Their Way

I've had this bit of information on my "must share in *Buzz*" list for a few weeks now, and I admit I am pilfering the concept from an America In Bloom newsletter. The concept is "wayfinding," which according to this WIKIPEDIA POST, "encompasses all of the ways in which people (and animals) orient themselves in physical space and navigate from place to place. The post is an interesting read, especially as wayfinding relates to how the ancient Polynesians and Pacific Islanders found their way in small boats sailed across a giant ocean.

How about those customers of yours trying to find their way through your freshly stocked nursery? They need to find their way to what they are looking for, too. According to Guide Studio, wayfinding is more than just having signage telling people where to go. It's more about connecting "various verbal and visual elements, including space, maps, directions, architecture, landscape design, symbols, colors and logos to enhance your brand and the overall experience of your







place."

As you put the details on your store's spring signage, consider these four signage "myth busters" from Guide Studio:

Myth #1: Signs Increase Visit Success. Maybe the problem is not where customers are being directed. Maybe the issue is the experience they encounter once they find what they are looking for.

Myth #2: The More Signs, The Better. Too many signs can cause confusion.

Myth #3: Signs Support Your Regulars. Wayfinding helps people develop mental maps. They'll eventually know how to get from place to place without those signs.

Myth #4: Signs Drive Business. Signs must relay more than just one aspect of your business. Signs do best when they send messages about what your brand represents.

P.S. You have until February 28 to submit your community for the America In Bloom competition! Get on it!



January Sales Remain Up

There always seems to be a slump in retail sales in January after the year-end holiday shopping sprees have ended. According to the National Retail Federation, that slump didn't happen. Retail sales (excluding autos, gas and restaurants) dipped just 0.26% (seasonally adjusted) in January and rang in as 5.4% more than the same time last year.

NRF released these numbers as part of their 2018 forecasting, which they say will grow between 3.8% and 4.4%. According to NRF's chief economist, factors driving this increase are increased employment, a tightening labor pool, wage growth and some increased paychecks due to recently made tax cuts.

Consumer confidence is staying steady. Will it last until our spring selling spree jumps into high gear?



Speaking of Employment …

It was announced last week that big-box home improvement retailers are gearing up for the spring season and are looking to hire. Home Depot will take on about 80,000 seasonal workers, and Lowe's will hire about 53,000 folks—that number is 8,000 more than last year.

But remember, we have a tightening labor market and unemployment numbers as of January were 4.1%. Home Depot and Lowe's plan on using new technologies to help make the hiring process easier, and also to sweeten the pot when it comes to wages and benefits.

You are looking to hire for the spring season, too. What's your hiring plan? Drop me a line about it HERE.



"Hedges In a Day!"

When I saw a press release come into my inbox this week with the subject heading "Finished Hedges in a Day!," I was skeptical. I've seen those "hedges" that are actually stiff plastic look-alikes—that's got to be what the release was referring to. Right?

Wrong! InstantHedges are the real chlorophyll-filled deal. According to the release, these hedges look like they've been growing in place for years. In fact, they *have* been growing in place for about four years, at the 80-plus acre Oregon nursery owned by InstantHedge creator Brent Markus. Using patented technology and GPS tracking equipment, the nursery's rows of trees are meticulously trimmed to create a dense and consistent hedge. That hedgerow is then dug up in 40-inch sections, shipped in a sturdy cardboard box and are ready to plant. "We don't ship plants," says Brent. "We ship plantscapes."





Brent got the idea for InstantHedge while on a trip to Holland in 2012. In 2014 he planted more than 400,000 plants. Now with some of them topping 6 ft., it's time to dig and ship. Brent has 13 different evergreen and deciduous varieties to choose from in zones ranging from 2-9, heights from 3-6 ft. and from full to partial sunlight. In the fall they plan to start selling 18-inch lengths of boxwood hedging.

And what does one do with InstantHedge? Well, it's essentially an instant privacy screen. No need to plant smaller trees or shrubs and wait for them to grow in. Landscape designers and architects will appreciate that.

I emailed Brent to ask him a little more about it. I threw out the idea of laying the hedges to create doorways and such. "The hedges are delivered in 40-inch panels … essentially blocks or 'Legos' for the landscape," he wrote back. "So you can create doors in a landscape, in place of a fence, or to distinguish outdoor rooms."



What about IGCs? Can they sell it?

"Yes!" he wrote. "For this spring we are offering InstantHedges delivered in woven plastic pots. These will be the same hedges we deliver in cardboard, but the plastic gives shelf life for garden centers and retailers." I think these would be an easy way for restaurants with outdoor seating—or anyone with outdoor patio space—to create instant privacy. And being in plastic woven pots means they could be moved around where needed.

Let me KNOW if you like the idea. If you're interested in more information—including how to order—find it on www.instanthedge.com.

That Pilea Alternative

As I've mentioned previously, *Pilea peperomioides* is the current "it plant" among houseplant-having Millennials. But it's not one of those plants you find readily available. Why is that?

I wrote in this week's *Tropical Topics* that I had a conversation with Ken Frieling of Glasshouse Works in Stewart, Ohio, about *P. peperomioides*. He's been growing it for dozens of years and has found it to be finicky; It prefers to be shallow-rooted in non-acidic soils and, because it is a seasonal grower, it takes a while to bulk up its numbers. It's not something larger growers can pump out of the greenhouse in large numbers like, say, petunias.

Gary Hunter of Gary's Specialty Plants in Pennsylvania wrote in to say he hasn't heard of and hasn't experienced any issues with growing *P. peperomioides*. His unrooted cuttings root in 3-4 weeks and so far he's not seen a need to adjust soil acidity or moisture.

My friend Richard Criley in Hawaii had said to look into *Peperomia polybotrya* as an alternative, and it turns out that Ken knows a little something about that plant, too. While not a dead-ringer for the pilea, *P. polybotrya* (a.k.a. owl eye plant) looks enough alike to be a good visual substitute. Rather than flat round leaves, owl eye has shield-shaped leaves that are somewhat cupped. And it's a lot less cranky, making it easier to grow, thus giving it better availability.

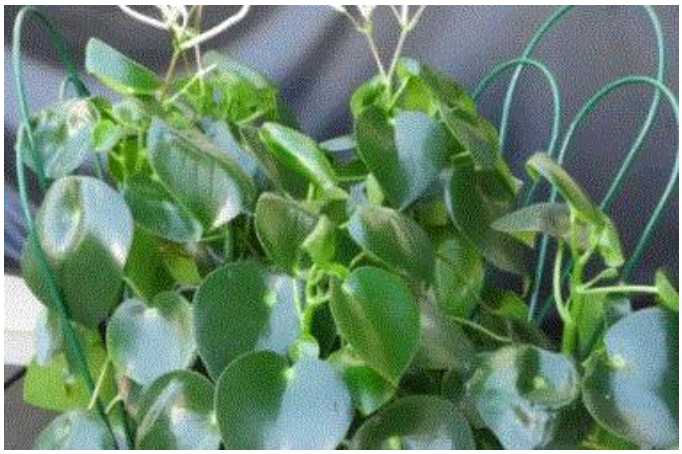


Photo credit: Glasshouse Works website.

Need School Money?

If so, the American Floral Endowment is accepting applications for more than 20 different scholarships. Students who are sophomores, juniors, seniors or graduate students in horticulture or floriculture can apply for scholarships ranging from $500 (could cover some books or tool expenses) to $6,000 (a nice chunk of change for tuition).

In 2017, AFE awarded 20 students with scholarships totaling more than $36,000. This year, AFE has added two new scholarships to the bunch for this year.

Descriptions of each scholarship—along with the requirements and applications for each—can be found HERE. They have added two new scholarships for 2018: the Long Island Flower Growers Association—Bob Gunther Memorial Scholarship and the CalFlowers Scholarship.

Take some time during Spring Break to get your application materials ready. Everything is due by May 1.

Two SAF Awards

Here are two awards that those of you who have been in the industry awhile can apply for. SAF is now taking applications for two big-deal recognitions:

- The American Academy of Floriculture (AAF) honors SAF members who have committed their time and energy to both the floral industry and their communities. The application requires community and industry service documentation and two recommendation letters from AAF members.
- The Century Award recognizes businesses and organizations that have served the floral industry for 100 years or more. The application requires documentation of the company's history, awards received and previous owners.

Considering how community focused our generations-old garden retail businesses are, I'd say just about everyone reading this is eligible! Be quick about applying, though. The deadline for applying is March 9. The recipients will be honored during the SAF Stars of the Industry Awards Dinner during the organization's 134th annual convention in Rancho Mirage, California, Sept 12-15.

For details and applications, go to safnow.org/awards.

Last Reminder!

Have you nominated your best garden retailer for the Dümmen Orange/*Green Profit* Young Retailer Award? You should, because there's only a week left! As a reminder, we're looking for your most-talented 35-and-under staffer. He or she could be a visual merchandiser, a department manager, an owner—even your own self! Regardless of what position this person holds, nominees must add some "can't survive without them" value to your business.

We've got an easy-to-use online nomination form to make the process quick. But do note—the more details you provide, the more information we have to use to sort the best from the better. Find that form at www.greenprofit.com/youngretailer.

And ditto for the Dümmen Orange/*GrowerTalks* Young Grower Award. So if you know a grower who is doing outstanding work, you can nominate her or him at www.growertalks.com/younggrower.

The three finalists for each award are given a sweet trip to Cultivate'18 in Columbus Ohio where they will be treated like horticultural royalty.

Act fast—nominations close March 1, just a week from today.

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Please do drop me a line at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
Green Profit

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