

Altman on Amazon, Botany Lane’s hibiscus, timely webinars



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TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Altman Plants on Amazon
Botany Lane Goes Hollywood
Hibiscus
Did I Say That?
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Finally ...



Ball Culture Guide

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
SEED GERMINATION

By JIM NAU

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Altman Plants on Amazon

As if they weren't already busy enough, what with the acquisition of the Plug Connection facilities, the unveiling of a new line of rose breeding and the overall day-to-day requirements of running one of the country's largest horticultural operations, Altman Plants of Vista, California, is now branching out into the online retail marketplace, via Amazon. Consumers are now able to choose from more than two dozen collections of succulents. Here's a quick fact: Altman's is the world's largest grower and breeder of succulents—so I imagine they have some great items to offer up on Amazon.

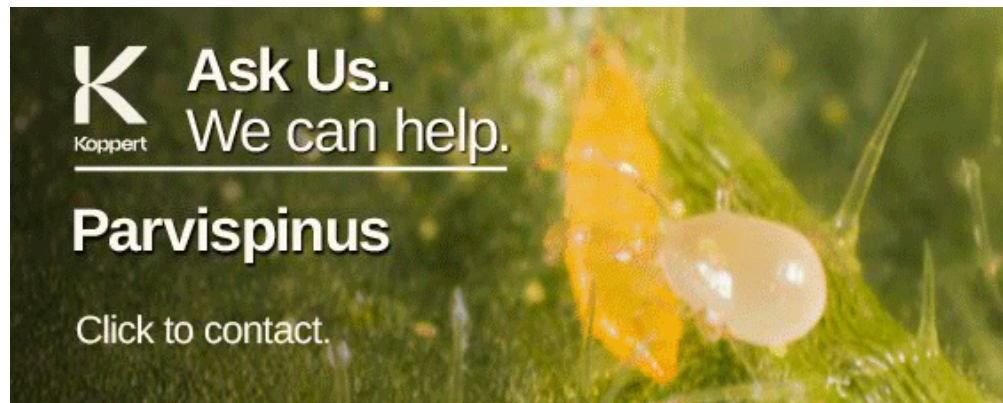
The products they are offering on Amazon seem like they cover the gamut of succulent uses, such as décor, obviously, but also they have a bunch of collections that would be educational for kids (the sensory-filled and the mimicry collections, for instance). You can view the whole bunch [HERE](#).



Above is an example of one of the collections specially tailored for children.

They even have a “wedding succulents” collection, which is an assortment of rosettes well-suited for creating table toppers for a reception. What I like is that these collections are hand picked and all match. With the overwhelming number of succulents out there, I find myself constantly caught in the paradox of choice and end up with nada since I can’t make up my mind. Plus, it’s Amazon: it couldn’t be easier to search and order and receive. They are also still operating their other two online shops—ShopAltmanPlants.com and CactusShop.com.

Altman Plants isn’t the first hort business to jump into online sales with Amazon, and they won’t be the last. Are you considering such a move? Drop me a line [HERE](#) to discuss.



Botany Lane to Offer Hollywood Hibiscus

It’s patio hibiscus season for most of the northern tier of the U.S. market. There is no better way for a Minnesotan or Michigander to add instant tropical color to the front stoop or lakeside patio than with a hibiscus. Traditionally it’s been hard to get tropical hibiscus after June 1 because the southern hibiscus growers sell out by the end of May.

The availability of tropical hibiscus is about to get better, thanks to the new liner program through Botany Lane Greenhouses with facilities in Colorado. They’ve connected with J. Berry Nursery and their Hollywood Hibiscus brand of tropicals to offer liners that will meet the demand for tropical color throughout the growing season, not just in spring. There is consumer demand for the hot tropical colors through autumn these days, and there’s no reason hibiscus couldn’t be that hot tropical color folks are looking for.



Botany Lane's general manager Scott Fulton says they'll be offering Hollywood varieties to growers in at least two ways: a multi-stick quart for a quick turn in early summer and 50-count plugs that can be timed for late summer and early fall. Plus, when they are produced closer to the sales market, that'll cut down on costs and give folks access to more frequent orders.

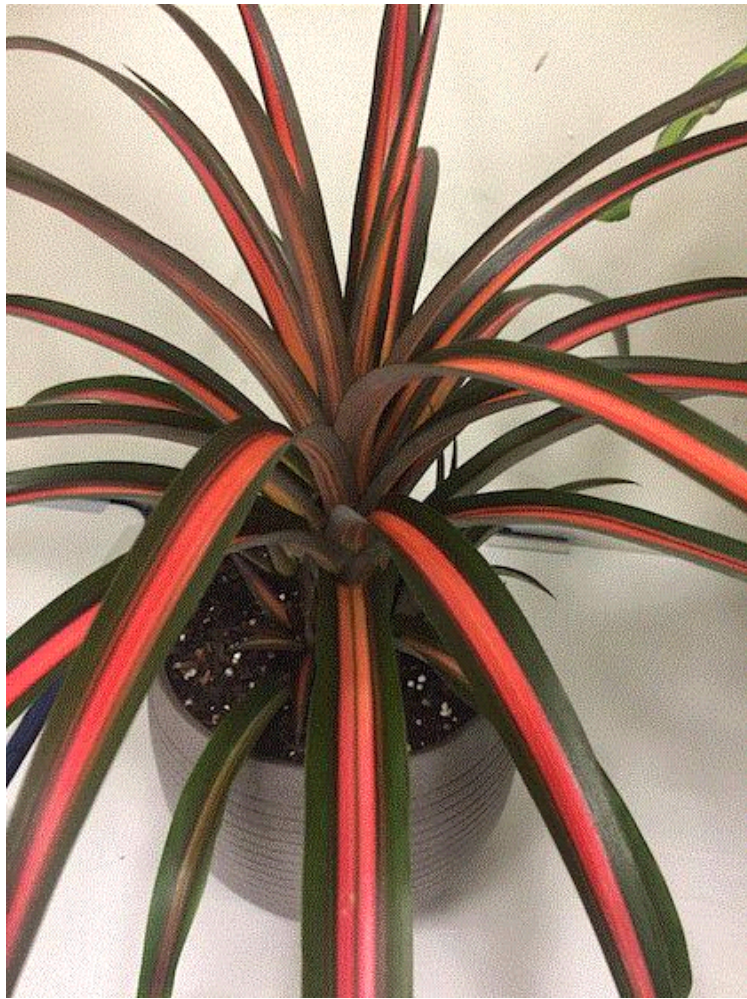
There's still time to get your crops ready for summer and fall. Drop Scott a **NOTE** about ordering in your liners. And check out www.hollywoodhibiscus.com to check out all that color. Or look for them at the upcoming summer trade shows, too.



Did I Say Tropicals Aren't Colorful?

I may have inferred in the last *Tropical Topics* that houseplants don't offer as much color as our annual plant friends. I realize that was a very broad and incorrect generalization—my apologies!

There are plenty of houseplants that offer foliage color to rival that of annual flowers. Costa Farms previewed several colorful varieties in the New Foliage Plant Showcase back in January. My favorite of the bunch is this ananas called Pink Starburst (also the name of my favorite candy). This ornamental pineapple has a bold dark pink stripe down the center of its leaves. The leaves, by the way, have smooth edges, unlike the serrated edges of many ornamental pineapple varieties. And they say Pink Starburst is easy to grow in average indoor conditions.



The other splash of foliar color from Costa Farms is an aglaonema called Lemonade (which I may have mentioned before). That lime green color is on trend and goes really well as a pop of color amidst darker green foliage items.



So yes, I stand corrected. We've got color aplenty here in *Tropical Topics* land!

Sun Parasol
FiredUp Coral



Webinar Alert—Times Two!

Folks, Ball Publishing has two webinars coming up that are likely right up your alley if you grow in pots, which I am sure many of you do. Here's what we have for you:

"Adding HydraFiber to Your Growing Mix" is set for Thursday, June 28 at 1 p.m. EDT/Noon Central. Wood fiber can be an effective growing mix component, but not all wood fiber products are created equal. The one we are profiling in this webinar is called HydraFiber Advanced Substrate, manufactured by Profile Products in North Carolina. It's been trialed by dozens of North America's largest growers, who are now using it as an amendment or alternative to perlite, peat, pine bark or coir.

Two experts from Profile Products will discuss:

- What sets HydraFiber apart from other substrate components and how it will make your mixes work harder
- How HydraFiber can fit into your program from several perspectives, including root development and overall plant quality, inventory management, shelf life, efficiency and environmental benefits
- Findings from the latest in-house and independent trials and research
- Real-world stories from some of the earliest adopters of HydraFiber, and their take on the transition to this new mix ingredient

The other webinar we have coming up quick is **"Common Weeds and their Management in**

Container Nursery Production,” which will be held on Tuesday, July 3 at 1 p.m. Eastern/Noon Central. If you grow nursery stock—and many of you tropicals growers certainly do—you are constantly battling weeds. Our weed expert Dr. Jeffrey Derr, Professor of Weed Science at Virginia Tech, will take you through basic weed ID and help you:

- Find the source of weed infestations in containers
- Learn to recognition of the major weed species
- Determine the proper and effective use of preemergence and postemergence herbicides

Thanks to BASF for sponsoring this weed webinar! It's info you need to know.

Both webinars will be hosted by our own Chris Beytes, editor, *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* and *Acres Online*. Sign up for both FREE webinars at www.growertalks.com/webinars. You will thank us later!

Finally ...

I'm taking an informal survey, friends. Are your houseplant sales up? I've heard they are, even during the summer months when the industry focus seems to be much more on annuals. If you're a houseplant grower or retailer, I'd love to get your recent experiences. And, if you have a gut feeling about where this houseplant train is heading, I'd like to get your thoughts on that, too. Send them my way at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

Have comments, questions, news to share? If so, just drop me a line at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
Green Profit

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