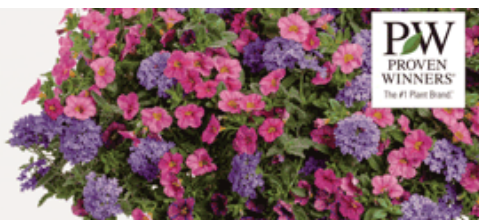


Int'l Women's Day, plus fashion, fizz and thanks a million



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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A Little Help, Please



International Women's Day

Today, March 8, is International Women's Day. While still gaining traction here in the U.S., people around the world have been taking this day to recognize not only the important women in their lives, but also to give a nod to women's contributions to society—which have been a lot!

And since a good portion of your customers are of the female persuasion, you should consider doing something to recognize and celebrate it. Like what?

Flowers and potted plants gifted to women have been a big way folks have recognized and celebrated women who touch their lives. We've got that covered, for sure. SAF has drafted some ways to promote the gifting of flowers and plants via social media, and they suggest taking these following ideas and posting/tweeting/short blogging about them:

- Women's Day is March 8. Who is your hero?
- This Women's Day, express your admiration with flowers!

- Women's Day is March 8. Who do you know who deserves to be celebrated? Your mom, sister, daughter, friend, spouse, co-worker?
- Say THANK YOU with flowers for Women's Day, March 8.
- Women's Day is March 8. Honor, respect and love translate so beautifully with flowers.
- This Women's Day, celebrate a friend with flowers!

Essentially, spread the word about International Women's Day, show that you are joining in the celebration—and suggest that you've got the goods necessary for folks to celebrate, too.

SAF also has a webpage filled with resources you can use to help. Find it [HERE](#).

Or you can take a page from what A.M.A. Horticulture, a manufacturer of grower product solutions such as pots and trays, is doing this week. The Canadian company, which is 50% female, has launched a weeklong campaign of having their female team members share their insights into driving the horticultural world forward.

Said A.M.A.'s managing director Connie Bradt-Monsma about the importance of sharing, "In order to keep pace with our industry and continue to deliver the best solutions for our customers, we need to be surrounded by a broad range of perspectives. The diverse insights and experiences of our team are the backbone of our success." Take a look at the messaging A.M.A. is putting out on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@amahort) and put a plan into place to share your company's diversity of perspectives using the hashtag #IWD2019. I think it's a really cool strategy.



Fashion & Fizz

Several weeks ago, I told you about the Birds & Blooms event that Jolly Lane Greenhouse held at their Rapid City, South Dakota, facility. They followed that successful January event with a February 16 fashion show they hosted on behalf of Black Hills Works, an organization that helps folks living with disabilities. They had a small window of time before that particular greenhouse would be filled with spring production, so they set up a catwalk space and 300 chairs, and despite a cold, windy and snowy day, it was standing room only when the event kicked off.



Fifteen of Black Hills Works' clients participated in the fashion show by creating their fashion-forward design and strutting their stuff down the catwalk. A local dance studio also participated that evening. "The program was a huge success and a lot of fun for all involved," wrote Tim Sime in an email. "The audience was amazed."



What could make the fashion show even better? Wine and beer! Tim had a 125-year-old solid

wooden bar in a dusty old barn which he unearthed after 35 years and used during his annual two-day chili pepper roast and farmers market event last September. It was a hit for that event, so they decided to make it more of a fixture at the greenhouse. Tim built a permanent space onto the greenhouse for the bar, and it was all completed just prior to the fashion show.



Tim has the beer and wine license (which was easier to get than he thought it would be) and his plan is to have the bar open on the weekends at least for the spring season and for events. He had it open this past weekend, and despite having only a Facebook post announcing that the bar was open, he had a “great crowd” show up. “The winter has been so brutally cold and snowy (today’s high was 0F), so I thought what better way to get people out to enjoy a beverage and see plants and feel a little spring in the air? And they loved it.”

Even though this past weekend was a one-off bar opening, everyone who came out wanted to know if they’d be serving up beer next Saturday, too. “We’ll see!” said Tim.

It’s gotta at least be open for St. Patrick’s Day, right, Tim? Call it Suds and Shamrocks. Keep us posted on how it goes.



Retro Is In Part 2

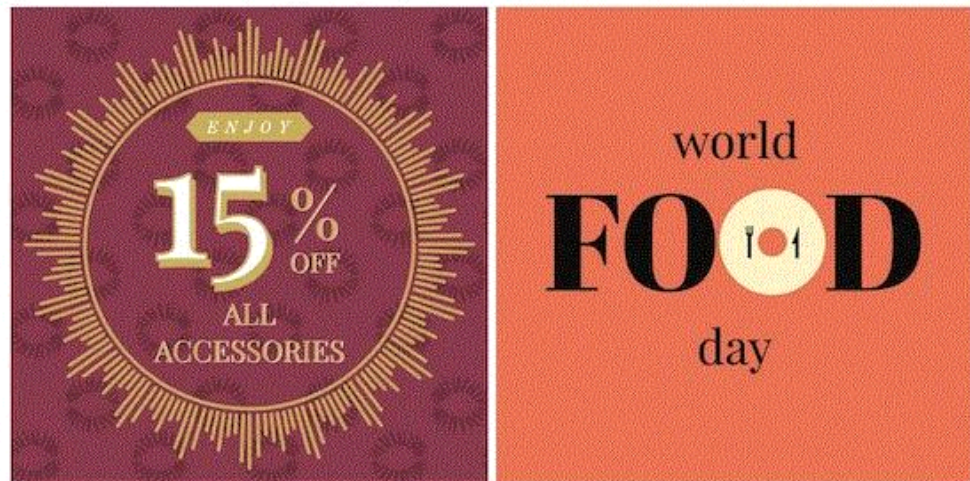
Also a few weeks ago I shared with you the new retro-inspired signs for Pleasant View Gardens’ Savor brand of edible and fragrant plants. Here’s what one of them looks like:



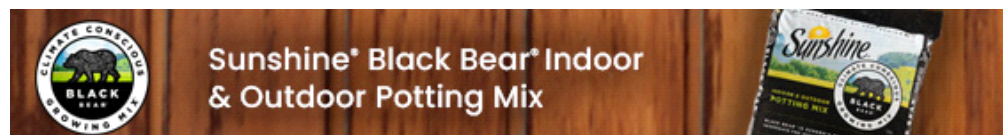
You know, they were definitely onto something. Editor Jennifer White had sent along an email containing a link to an article about how retro fonts are one of hottest trending fonts for 2019. Here's what the blog Adobe Spark had to say about serif and old-timey fonts:

"Perhaps nostalgic for flowery, ornate fonts, we've been seeing an increase in old-timey serif fonts like Playfair and Abril Fafta. They work great for invitations and short lines of text when you want to impart a classic, old-fashioned, or ornate vibe."

And here's what they used to illustrate their point:



They had a ton more font and design trends for 2019. Read about them [HERE](#). I lean toward the "Brutalist Layouts" trend myself.



Spruce Up Your Outdoor Room (Display)

I received a press release from the folks at the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute with their top five ways to create the outdoor living room. First, who knew there was an Institute for Outdoor Power Equipment? Pretty cool! Second, while this information is geared toward homeowners and residential locations, I heartily believe you can use these same tips to get your outdoor living area displays ready to go in your garden center. Or, maybe even offer this sprucing up service to your landscape clients.

Tip 1: Declutter and clean. Channel your inner Marie Kondo and tidy the junk that has accumulated in that spot over the winter. Put away anything that doesn't belong in an outdoor living area. Give everything a good scrubbing, including the furniture, pavers and even the canvas.

Tip 2: Create cozy sitting areas. Make sure traffic flow in the area is smooth and offer plenty of seating options (and more furniture to sell!). Umbrellas and outdoor curtains are vital for a comfortable outdoor space—for sale, yes, but even just for customers who need to get out of the sun.

Tip 3: Soften the outdoor space. Suggest rugs, pillows and upholstered cushions to soften the edges of furniture. Add comfort and fun with string lights, candles, water features—and plants! Take advantage of movement and sound to create a sense of mellowness.

Tip 4: Utilize living landscapes. Flowers, shrubs, combo containers ... you've totally got that tip covered! Have you considered suggesting cut flowers on outdoor patios to draw traffic to your floral department?

Tip 5: Invite the outdoors in. Perhaps not totally apropos of the garden center environment, blend the indoor and outdoor spaces by opening curtains to see outside, make sure the indoor and outdoor décor that can be seen at the same time complement each other and create a consistency of style.



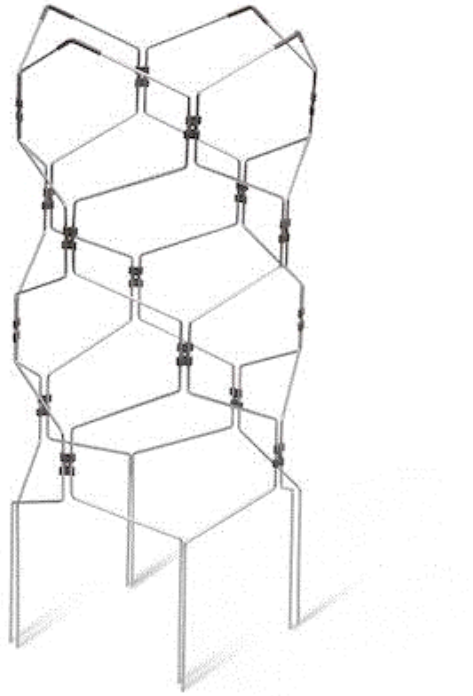
Green Thumb Hardgoods Awards

Last time in *Buzz* I told you about the plant winners of this year's 2019 Green Thumb Awards. This time around, I've got the two hardgoods winners for you. Both are from the friendly folks at Gardener's Supply Company.

Bamboo Home LED Grow Light Garden. It's a modular system with high-intensity LED grow lights set in bamboo frames. It consists of two modules that you can use separately or stack. One unit is short and is meant for seed starting and small houseplants. The larger unit can accommodate taller houseplants but could also be for seed starting. The galvanized trays are rust-proof, and the whole frame rolls for easy repositioning. I totally like that last feature.



Vertex Lifetime Tomato Cage. What's the worst thing about tomato cages? Storage, most definitely. This tomato cage is designed to fold flat. Formed aluminum wires are joined together with nylon couplers to allow easy folding and unfolding. Extra-long wires stabilize the cage into the ground, and the cantilever design allows the cage to sway in the wind. I like the hexagonal openings, which they say are meant to gently cradle the tomato branches and allow easier access to the fruit during harvesting. No welded joints to break and no rust on the aluminum wires, so this "Lifetime" cage should last a lifetime.



What you're saying is, "Why should I sell something that is sold by an online store?" Keep in mind that these products were chosen by gardening experts, and therefore these are the types of products gardeners are looking for. Rather than ordering the same-old tomato cages, for example, think about tools that will really help your customers in their pursuit of gardening success.

The Essential Oils/Fresh Décor Connection

Shannon Kuhrt, VP of M&M Wintergreens, emailed me a few weeks ago SO EXCITED to have participated in the recent Five Trending Marketing Tips for IGCs (which you can still do [HERE](#) – scroll down to the bottom to find it). "A lot of the points made in this webinar I touch on in [my March blog post] but with the angle of how it relates to Christmas/Winter décor," she wrote. Her post, which you can read [HERE](#), explains how winter décor—fresh greens such as fir, juniper, magnolia and such—can stir or activate the same responses that are elicited by essential oils.

The oils specific to trees are called phytoncides, and they can aid in lowering stress and trigger a calming response in people. Even the cut branches of greenery can emit those phytoncide compounds, so having them around during the stressful holiday season is almost like writing yourself a prescription for calm. Not to mention, these cut greens decorating a home inside and out is the winter version of "forest bathing," that Japanese practice of surrounding yourself in the calming environment of the deep woods. And they're pretty and festive, so they work double duty.

Congrats On a Million!

Friends, you should be proud of yourselves! We just got word from AmericanHort and HRI that their Million Pollinator Garden Challenge (MPGC) has hit their mark. In fact, they surpassed the target number, having registered 1,040,000 pollinator gardens, with more than 8 million people associated with those gardens. These gardens—mostly in the U.S. and Canada, but also some in Mexico—total a whopping 5 million acres of habitat for pollinators.

The challenge was launched in June 2015 by the National Pollinator Garden Network with the goal of creating a network of gardens that benefit pollinators, which have seen decreases in their populations in recent years. It became the largest pollinator conservation effort to engage both horticultural members and volunteers. And as a result, the MPGC led to a shift in consumer awareness about the issue. The [impact report](#) also notes that 92% of garden centers have seen an increase in demand for pollinator-friendly plants and services and 86% are offering more pollinator-friendly plants, services and education. That's why I said congrats at the beginning!

So, where to now? The next steps in the MPGC are:

1. Expand the available garden habitat by asking folks to plant different pollinator-friendly plants that bloom in three different seasons to help provide consistent food for pollinators.
2. Encourage people to participate in citizen science projects that help pollinators. These can be found at www.scistarter.org/pollinatorgardens.

There's no time to rest on our laurels, folks. Get your customers (and yourselves) off to a great start on the next set of challenges as soon as spring has sprung.

A Little Help, Please

Amazon packages may be dropped off a billion times a day, but in the end it's just a box or a bag. And good luck if there is a problem for which you need an interaction with a human. You, flesh-and-blood garden center employees, are way better than that.

I'm working on an article for an upcoming issue of *Green Profit* magazine about how IGCs such as yourselves offer services and create experiences that tip the scales in your favor when you can't compete on price with Amazon and other online retailers. What are you doing and creating to set yourself apart? Maybe it's a bar in the greenhouse like our friend Tim Sime at Jolly Lane. Maybe it's offering an outdoor living room spruce-up service. You have ideas to share, and I would love to know about them. Let me know your "I'm better than Amazon" strategy—jot me a note about it [HERE](#).

Comments? Questions? Let me have 'em at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
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