

# Summer Tour adds a bus, a TKO for FTD, and the future of homes and plastics

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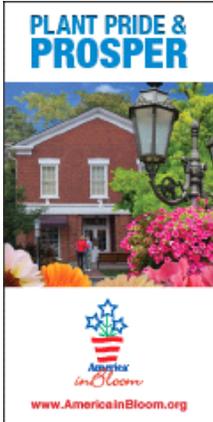


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## GCA's Summer Tour is Popular

So popular, in fact, that the folks at Garden Centers of America (GCA) have added a third bus for this year's GCA Summer Tour of garden centers in the Nashville area happening June 23-26. Apparently y'all listened to me last week when I urged you to register before the early-bird discounts ended on May 31 and there was such an overload of demand, they secured another bus to accommodate everyone. This is great news, as I was possibly needing to follow the buses in a rental!

If you haven't booked your rooms at host hotel Sheraton Grand Nashville Downtown, you must do so ASAP—by this Friday, June 7—to take advantage of the discounts offered to GCA Summer Tour attendees. Remember, Nashville is incredibly popular now and the city fills quickly with tourists and event attendees like us!

I've never been to Nashville and am excited to experience not only the city and culture, but also the variety of garden retailers in the greater Nashville region. Like Donny and Marie, they're a little bit country and a little bit rock and roll. Also on the agenda are daily container garden-building demos and a Tuesday night pub crawl on Music Row.

Register for the Summer Tour and access the hotel registration [HERE](#). If that pub crawl interests you, sign up for that [HERE](#).



## TKO for FTD?

You likely have heard the reports that FTD filed for bankruptcy protection this week. The 110-year-old company based in Downers Grove, Illinois, has agreed to sell some of its businesses, which include ProFlowers, Interflora, GiftCo and the like, while it pays down debt.

FTD had announced in March that it could possibly go belly up by summer if it didn't either find funds or a buyer. They need to raise more than \$217 million by September to cover debts coming due.

So, what happened? According to a [Chicago Tribune article](#), FTD had acquired ProFlowers and sister brands Shari's Berries and Personal Creations back in 2014, hoping that these additional businesses could bring in more and different customers for a wider variety of products. Not only did FTD find it difficult to integrate the companies they bought, they found themselves with new and vibrant competitors in a changing marketplace.

FTD announced that operations with participating florists will continue and orders will be taken and fulfilled during the restructuring process.

Any of you involved with FTD? Did this come out of left field or did you see this coming a million miles away? Drop me a line about it [HERE](#).



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## Home of the Future

Have you ever seen those 1950s black-and-white films of what we could expect the homes of the future to be like? Where's my dishwasher that cleans dishes using sound waves, I'd like to know? Turns out that living quarters of the future will be more like the dwellings in "Fifth Element" than something you'd see in a 1952 issue of *Good Housekeeping*.

Furniture giant Ikea is **PREDICTING** what the home of the future will be like during its "Democratic Design Days." In a nutshell, they have good reason to believe that the future home will most likely be urban with kitchens, hallways and dining areas shared by multiple families. Oh, and the furniture will be robotic!



A computer illustration of the Better Living project neighborhood.

Source: EFFEKT Architects for SPACE10

Ikea believes that, because 70% of the world's population will want to live in cities by 2050, we'll end up having to share much more of our stuff. Homes will range between two-family households to hotel-like complexes with joint kitchens, dining areas and recreational areas (residences like this are already being built in some cities, such as here in Boston). The purpose of robotic furniture is to save space in these smaller-footprint living quarters.

That's all very well and good, but what does this say about our relationships to plants? Will we have less room for plants in these smaller spaces? Or, because these living units will be clutter-free and efficient, will we need more plants to help connect us with nature? My bet is on the latter, of course. I'm also predicting these co-living spaces will have communal gardening spaces indoors, and also outdoors, if possible.

If you have six minutes, check out this [VIDEO](#) of how our today was supposed to be.



## Plastics

I posted this item about a possible surplus plastic solution in my *Tropical Topics* e-newsletter earlier this week, and respondents have indeed confirmed that consumers—and retailers!—are consistently irritated about the amount of non-recyclable plastic that accompanies our products. Consumers are up to their eyeballs in plastic and don't like it. And with all of the news about plastics in our oceans, people want to do something about it.

A research lab may have found an in-the-future solution. According to the folks at Trendwatching.com, scientists at the Berkeley Lab have created a plastic that can be recycled an infinite number of times. Still just a product in a lab, Berkeley Lab's plastic apparently can be broken down at the molecular level and can then be used to create brand-new plastic. Whereas the "old" plastic would be recycled and transformed into lower-quality plastic, this new plastic maintains its durability when made into something new. That's so cool and very Star Trek, if you ask me.

Here's the article about it in [Nature](#).

## Tanner's Tropical Combos

A few weeks ago I asked my *Tropical Topics* readers to send along their best tropical-focused container designs. I assumed the submissions would come from Florida and points south, but I was way off—by about half the country.

Tanner Jones, container designer extraordinaire (and current Young Retailer Finalist) at Helmi's Gardens in Columbia, Missouri, sent in several photos of tropical plant-filled containers that do well in the heat and humidity of the middle of the country. "People are blown away by how well [tropical containers] perform in Missouri," Tanner wrote. "It gets HOT here."

Here are a few of the mixed tropical containers Tanner sent along to share.



*Ixora Maui*, *Croton Petra*, *schefflera*, *Canna Pretoria*, *petunia*, *Cuphea llavea*, *Russelia equisetiformis*,  
*Philodendron Prince of Orange*, *Alocasia Regal Shields* and *Sedum Lemon Coral*



*Strelitzia* White Bird, rubber bush ficus, agapanthus, *Scaevola* Whirlwind Blue, *Ixora* Maui, *Jatropha* Spicy Pink, *Neoregelia* Fireball and *Calibrachoa* Raspberry Punch



*Ficus lyrata*, *Xanthosoma aurea* Lime Zinger, impatiens, variegated St. Augustine grass, variegated shell ginger and *Phoenix roebelenii*

We are nearing the time to create hot tropical containers for summer sales. I hope these can be inspiration for your summer creations. Have any of your own designs you'd like share? Send them **MY WAY**.

### Speaking of ...

Tanner Jones happens to be one of the three finalists for the 2019 *Green Profit*/RBI Young Retailer Award. As in past YRA competitions, Tanner and fellow finalists Morgan Huston (Birdsall & Co., Englewood, Colorado) and Madison Williams (Boulevard Flower Gardens, South Chesterfield, Virginia) penned essays on a hot topic for the magazine's June issue. The question, "How do you plan ahead for the long-term to keep your garden center business advancing/moving forward, while also handling your day-to-day tasks?" was met with some compelling—and useful—answers.

Get to know the finalists and give the essays a read **HERE**. You can give the finalists your support by attending the announcement of the 2019 YRA winner during Cultivate'19 at the Unplugged event held at Callahan's on July 15 at 8:00 p.m.

### EHR's Spring Trials Report

I had *just* finished my portion of the *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* California Spring Trials coverage for our July issue when I received an email from Eason Horticultural Resources containing the 2019 edition of their very own California Spring Trials Report. While Chris, Jen and I do a pretty awesome job with our coverage, there's no way we can do what the folks at EHR do.

And what is it they do, exactly? They compile all of the input from all of their salespeople who attended trials and reported on the genetics from the 27 plant breeding companies. And since EHR is not aligned with any specific breeder or genetics, they give an honest and independent reporting of what they see. And they see all of it! It's an impressive and monumental task.



If you'd like a digital copy of this year's EHR California Spring Trials Report, send your request to [info@ehrnet.com](mailto:info@ehrnet.com). You can request it in digital or print form.

## HRI Scholarships

The Horticultural Research Institute—AmericanHort's research arm—awards a whole bunch of monies in scholarship form each year. HRI is now accepting applications for its next round of scholarships for the 2019-2020 school year. These endowment funds are available to help students pursue degrees and lifelong careers in horticulture.

Nearly \$20,000 is available for the next school year from these seven HRI endowment funds:

- The Timothy S. and Palmer W. Bigelow, Jr. Scholarship
- The Usrey Family Scholarship
- The Bryan A. Champion Memorial Scholarship
- The Susie & Bruce Usrey Scholarship
- The Spring Meadow Scholarship
- The "Muggets" Scholarship
- The Carville M. Akehurst Memorial Scholarship

Get the ball rolling on the application process [HERE](#).

## Webinar Alert!

Ever wonder what happens when you combine HydraFiber with Ellepots? Ball Publishing has a webinar on that coming up on **Thursday, June 20, 1:00 p.m. Eastern**. The Blackmore Company's Dr. Bill Argo has studied pH and nutritional management of container-grown crops for quite a while, and in this webinar he will share his research on wood fiber substrates and will also offer guidelines for growing in Ellepots.

Bill will be joined by Daniel Norden, Senior R&D Manager and Technical Specialist Manager for Profile Products, who will share findings from university and grower trials that used HydraFiber Advanced Substrate. As always, Chris Beytes will host. Register at [www.growertalks.com/webinars](http://www.growertalks.com/webinars).

Comments, questions, suggestions? Drop me a line at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).



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