

The Friendsgiving edition

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Green Profit's **buzz!**

Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- And by That I Mean ...
- Something Hot
- Something Trendy
- Something Innovative
- Something (Ir)Replaceable
- Something Legislative
- Something Rejuvenating
- Something Educational
- And a Dessert of Gratitude

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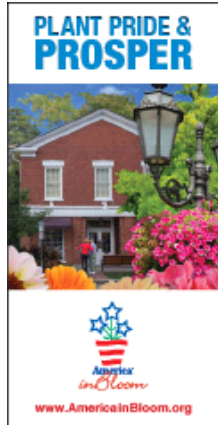
And by That I Mean ...

It's a potluck version of *buzz!* this week. A dish of this, a dish of that—similar to what friends offer each other as they celebrate the family-free version of the fall holiday. **Brussels sprouts**, **apple and pomegranate salad**, that's what I'm bringing to the feast—along with some items about pruners and plants, trends and TPIE and a few other bits and bobbles ...

What am I bringing to this Friendsgiving edition of *buzz!*?

Something Hot

Peppers are a hot veg item in the garden, and the hotter the pepper, the more in demand it is. Burpee has heard the call and is meeting that demand with a new hot pepper that sounds hot just by the name alone. Bred by the UK's Tozer Seeds, Armageddon is the first F1 hybrid super-



hot chili pepper. And by super-hot, they mean it! At 1.3 million Scovilles, it's one of the hottest peppers on the market. To put that in some perspective, jalapeños are 2,500-8,000 Scovilles (get me a mango lassi, stat!).



OMG, that's alotta Armageddon!

Burpee's Jayson Force informed me that Armageddon has more fruit per plant and is two to three weeks earlier to produce than Carolina Reaper. The good news is that this 2020 variety is actually available now. So for you southern growers and retailers, you can meet demand for those winter/early spring gardens.

Contact your Ball Seed rep or head over to www.ballseed.com for more info.

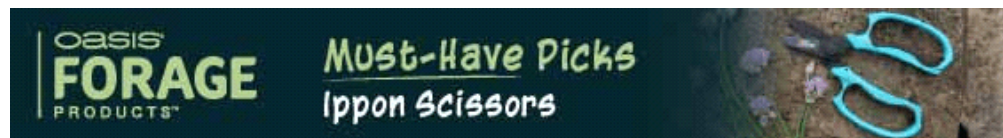


Something Trendy

Get yourself to the Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE), happening at the Broward County Convention Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, January 22-24. The trip is worth it for the opening keynote alone. Maxwell Luthy, Director of Trends & Insights at trend-tracking firm Trendwatching, is one of the most engaging speakers I have had the pleasure to see. He presented at TPIE back in 2018 and was the talk of the show. His 2020 keynote will focus on five key trends, all of which will use plants and green spaces to boost mental and physical well-being.



Find out how your plants and products can help tackle some of the biggest issues of the day! But first, you've got to register. Begin your registering and hotel finding at www.tpie.org.

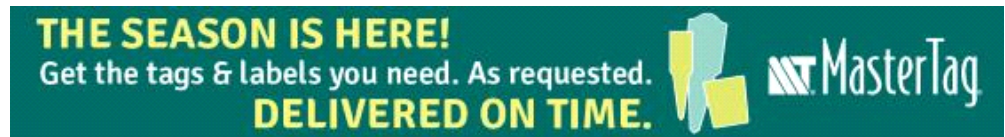


Something Innovative

Speaking of my friend Max and the folks at Trendwatching, they recently published their Top 5 Retail Innovations of the Year. Of the five, the one most appropriate to our space is a “digital farmers market” livestreaming the stories of producers to the Chinese public. [Taobao Live](#) is the livestreaming section of Alibaba’s C2C marketplace and has allowed farmers to manage their own livestream channels, sell their wares and earn quite a bit of money while doing so. Why is this farmer-driven livestreaming important? Because a) it allows everyone to tell their story—whether it’s a rice farmer in rural China or an IGC owner in Illinois—and b) it allows the viewer to be entertained/informed/engaged with others *while also* shopping for products.



The question is—how can we translate Taobao Live into something that will compel gardeners to visit and buy from *you*? Thoughts? Drop me a line about them [HERE](#).



Something (Ir)Replaceable

We got word that counterfeit Felcos have been selling on Amazon since last year. For shame! I was actively writing up the news when Bossman Beytes' Acres Online came into my inbox, which contained a perfectly worded item all about the faux Felco foolery. Why reinvent the pruners, I mean, wheel?

If there is any brand in horticulture more loved than Felco, I don't know what it is. People are passionate about their Felco #2 secateurs the same way they are about their dogs, their cats and maybe even their kids (the real enthusiasts even use the term "secateur"). A Felco tattoo is as much the mark of a hardcore gardener as an Ironman logo is of an endurance athlete. I've never gone that far, but I do own two pair, including an unusual Felco 16 lefty model ... but I found I've used the right-handed #2s for so long, I like them better. I've also got a Felco cap I only wear on special occasions.

All this is to set up how smart it is of the 75-year-old Swiss company to offer free replacements for the estimated 3,000 folks who got saddled with fake Felcos they unknowingly purchased on Amazon. The situation unfolded around the holidays of 2018, with customers reporting dissatisfaction with the quality of the Felcos they were receiving. Turns out they were Asian knockoffs. Here's a description of the real deal and the counterfeits:



- FELCO blades are always attached to handles by three pins and never with screws.
- FELCO hardware uses only hexagonal flathead screws.
- FELCO tools always have a clear, fine, deep stamped logo into the aluminum handles.
- FELCO thumb catches have a compact specific design, they are tightly fastened to the handle and never touch the red grip.
- FELCO red plastic grips are precisely applied to the aluminum handles. The grips cannot be peeled back by hand.



- Counterfeit blades are often attached with a screw on the inside of the blade.
- Counterfeit hardware is not precision cut, has a poor, rough finish and often uses round Philips head screws.
- Counterfeit logos are often laser cut, thick, unaligned and contain spelling mistakes (i.e. ELCO, FILCO, etc.)
- Counterfeits often have large, loose thumb catches that touch the red grip.
- Counterfeit grips often have gaps between the metal handle and the plastic grips. These grips can be peeled back by hand.

Felco has launched the website www.realfelco.com where scammed customers can get info about sending in the counterfeits in exchange for the real deal.*

Well played, Felco! So beware: If you spot some #2s at a price that seems too good to be true ... it probably is.

**You can also see the original of the above photo and maybe read the words a little easier by going to the www.realfelco.com website.*



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Something Legislative

Just an update on the Farm Workforce Modernization Act. I mentioned last week that the bill had been sent to the House for consideration. Well, it's up to us as an industry and up to YOU as a member of it to let your representatives know you support it. That's how democracy works, after all—by participating in it.

And it's pretty easy to show them your support, too. AmericanHort has created a form to quickly fill out with your contact information and a pre-worded paragraph of support. Just click on this [LINK](#) to make your voice heard.

Sure, I get it. You want to be fully informed before you throw your weight behind a bill. Understandable! You can get the summary of the bill [HERE](#).

Something to Get Back On Track

It was common knowledge that retailer Target was off-target with their profits a few years ago and, had they continued along the path they were on, would have been in big financial trouble. But in the last five years, they've successfully turned the business around to the tune of \$7 billion and is the best-performer on the S&P Retailer Index this year. How'd they come back from the brink?

According to [Bloomberg](#), the secret is doing the basics of retail correctly while also preparing for uncertainty. They used a four-pronged approach:

Turning their stores into destinations. They're in the process of remodeling more than 1,000 stores to be easier to shop, plus have opened new, smaller stores in urban areas and college campuses.

Carrying in-demand products. They've developed more than 24 new in-house brands—some that have become huge hits. Store brands have a bigger profit margin, and by introducing so many in a steady stream, it brings customers back in to see what's new.

Its web strategy is working for brick-and-mortar stores. The secret is to get folks to pick up their online orders either in-store or curbside to cut costs of shipping/delivery.

Avoiding distractions. New initiatives need carry-through. Have a plan—like Target's mini-Disney stores—and capitalize on them via box office hits.

If you're hoping to rebound your business, get out of a slump or just want to improve your sales overall, how can you implement any or all of these four strategies for your own benefit?

Something Educational

For you grower-retailers out there, let's spend some of the (supposed) downtime this winter educating ourselves, shall we? You can do so from the comfort of your home or office, too, through the Michigan State University Extension's Online College of Knowledge. The program has three self-paced courses in the greenhouse series (click on the course for more info):

- [Greenhouse and Horticultural Lighting](#)
- [Biological Control for Greenhouse Growers](#)
- [Floriculture Root Zone Management](#)

All non-credit courses are now available in both English and Spanish—and good thing, too,

because folks from all over the world—33 different countries!—have taken at least one of these courses. And the courses are pre-recorded, too, which makes them easy to “attend” when you have time. Which doesn't mean there isn't a schedule for completion—students must take and complete the course between December 1 and February 29. Each course is \$129 (some scholarships are available). But you've got to **REGISTER** by December 15.

And a Dessert of Gratitude

During this holiday of giving thanks, I'm grateful for the folks working behind-the-scenes to push legislation forward that will benefit the green industry. AmericanHort and SAF, as well as the numerous state-level industry organizations, work tirelessly to pass through legislation that covers such a wide range of issues—from workers to water quality, taxes to trucking, you name it, they've got to know about it, and most importantly, they need to know how you, their constituents, wish to proceed. So, while you may feel you don't have time to get involved, you do have time to share your opinions. Get off the sidelines and participate, friends.

What are you grateful for this holiday? Drop me a **LINE** about it if you'd like.

Happy Thanksgiving, all! Comments, questions and suggestions? Send them to ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
Green Profit

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