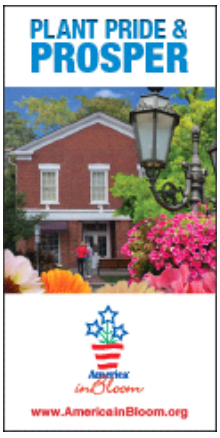
Resources and tips to get you through the crisis, plus Victory veg makes a comeback

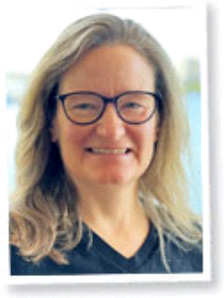








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Green Profit's buZZ

Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

COVID-19 GC Resources …
… and Tips
Where's Gardening Essential?
A New Partnership for IGCs
Speaking of Edibles …
Pete Pike Passes
CASTing Calls
What Do I Think?



COVID-19 Garden Center Resources ...

For those of you who received *Tropical Topics* earlier this week, this section may look familiar, but do know we've added a few resources. And for those who didn't receive *TT*, we've gathered a bunch of useful websites with information about all aspects of the COVID-19 crisis, starting with the important medical stuff first and going through financial, legislative and small business matters.

CDC Comprehensive website: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's comprehensive website gives you all the factual information as well as a site dedicated to businesses and employers.

Coronavirus Resource Center: AmericanHort's resource site has everything from news on legislation and foreign labor to communication tips and infographics on the benefits of plants. It's a good place to keep up with news that impacts your horticultural business. Updated often! In fact, it already has the "Families First Coronavirus Response Act" webinar that was held Wednesday, as well as Part 3 of Dr. Bridget Behe's "Shopping From the Consumer's Perspective" webinar, which is free to non-members as it was modified to address several COVID -19-related shopping and retail environment issues. Click on the "webinars" button to see those two webinars.

The Society of American Florists: SAF is offering education and webinars that translate easily from one hort specialty to another. From communications to HR to financial stuff, they'll have it all—and they've opened it up for non-members during this time, too. Check out their webinar offerings at https://safnow.org/events-education/webinars/.

COVID-19 Small Business Resources: Found by our Digital Editor Bill Calkins and from America's Small Business Development Center. Everything you need from the CDC, SBA, OSHA and Facebook for business.

FNGLA's Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resources: This site has two dozen or more links to everything

from the CDC site and CDC's list of approved antimicrobial cleaning agents to OSHA workplace guidelines and Florida bridge loan programs.

Ball Publishing's COVID-19 News & Updates webpage is up and available to you. *GrowerTalks'* Jen Zurko has gathered information ranging from retail strategies to best management practices. You can access it from *Green Profit's* home page, http://www.greenprofit.com/, as well at the *GrowerTalks* home page.



As you know, this situation is ever-changing. Check these resource pages daily. AND, more importantly, if you know of a page we should be linking to, drop me a note about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com and we'll get that information out there.



… and Tips

I've truly been impressed and humbled by how quickly retailers of all types have adjusted to providing for customers' needs in this time of social distancing. For instance, my yoga studios began offering online courses within days, and nearly all restaurants offered takeout and delivery rather than close for good—so far. One Italian restaurant I know is offering meals prepped for you to cook at home (a restaurant owned by a contestant on the current season of Top Chef, by the way).

We're all doing what we can *how* we can. Ball Hort's Marvin Miller was kind enough to send me this list of tips for how to serve garden retail customers during this time, which he'd seen from the Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association:

- Consider offering online shopping, phone orders, curbside pickup or delivery as available.
- Limit the number of customers near the cash registers and in the store at any given time. Many retailers are marking the floor in check-out lines to encourage social distancing.
- Sanitize all carts, baskets, door handles and credit card pads throughout the day.
- Staff members will be required to sanitize regularly.
- Have hand sanitizer available at the checkout.
- Social distancing between staff and customers is required in the store, grounds and greenhouses.
- Any individual exhibiting even minor symptoms should stay home.

And then there's this that colleague Jen Polanz sent to me:



The Rhino Hand Wash Station. I've used one of these recently in a food shop that was still offering seating-and-eating outside. I and my fellow customers were impressed.

Tips of your own to share? Send them my way at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Update: Where is Gardening "Essential"?

This week, Bossman Chris Beytes took on the Sisyphean task of congregating together the states in which "garden center" was included as an "essential" business. Here's what he had to say:

The stay-at-home orders continue to spread like the virus, with 17 states currently under such restrictions—that's about half the U.S. population. Globally, BBC reports that about a quarter of the world's population is under some form of lockdown, including China, Italy, Spain, India, France, Poland, the UK, New Zealand, Colombia and too many others to list.

Here at home, even under lockdown, most areas seem to be classifying greenhouses and even garden centers as "essential." Garden center consultant Sid Raisch, administrator of the Facebook group "Garden Center—IGCs, Suppliers and Media," asked the question of members Wednesday if their state had issued a close order, and if so, have garden centers been

exempted. He had received the following after just a few hours:

New York: Essential per THIS document from New York State Agriculture and Markets.

North Carolina: Essential per THIS from the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Delaware: Essential per THIS official listing.

Pennsylvania: Not essential, but PNLA has asked the state for an exemption. Chris shared this ARTICLE about how restrictions are impacting PA IGCs this morning.

Colorado: Essential per a document from the state Department of Agriculture listing "food and plant cultivation" and "agricultural supply chain" as critical.

Oregon: Essential by not being included in a LIST of non-essential retail businesses that must close.

Louisiana: Essential, but no official proof supplied.

Massachusetts: Essential only if they sell "food and beverage products." They can sell other products via curbside pickup and delivery.

Illinois: Not clear, but the Illinois Green Industry Association RESOURCE PAGE suggests, "many of you offer ways for customers to produce fruits and vegetables at their residences, sell firewood, pet supplies, and other household essentials. We are seeing some operations across the country adapt by offering call-ahead, website ordering, drive-by pickup and other creative options to keep material moving and keep customers planting."

Broward County, Florida: Essential per a County Administrator's Emergency Order listing "hardware, gardening and building material stores."

Connecticut: Essential per THIS executive order.

Know of others? Drop us a note at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



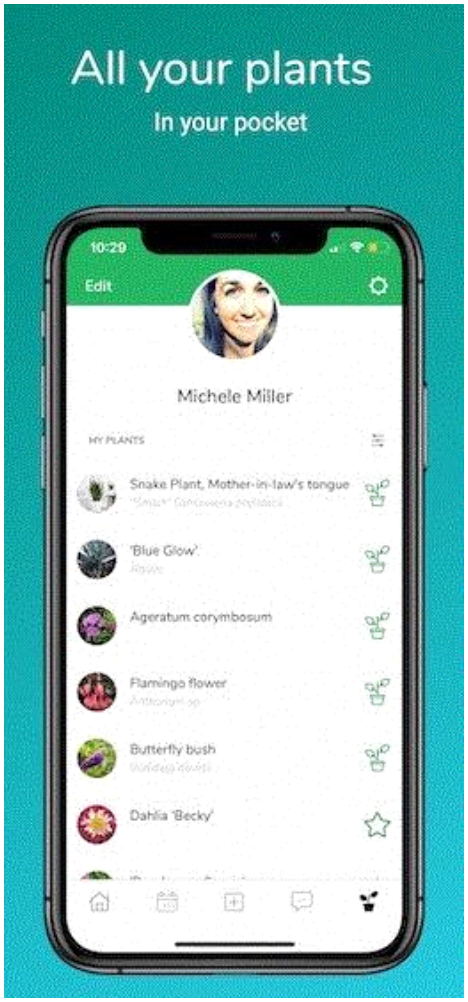
A New Partnership for IGCs

IGCs throughout the country are trying every which way possible to remain open for customers as spring begins. Colleague Jen Polanz spoke with some folks about a new partnership that, although in the works previous to the COVID-19 crisis, will be able to help IGCs with "social distancing"-appropriate shopping. Here's what Jen has gathered on the topic:

The principals involved in a new partnership for garden retail pitched it as a way to reach Millennials who connect with retail in a different way. Soon, it also will help retailers bring in customers for online ordering and curbside pickup, as well. The collaboration is between the people behind the Smart Plant Home app and multiple garden retail vendors: distributor Prince Corporation, ecommerce fulfillment company Home and Garden Fulfillment, and The Perfect Plant (technically now a part of Smart Plant Home as it was purchased about two months ago). We'll talk about all the functionality in a minute, but the group has mobilized in the last week to help partner retailers by offering online ordering that directs users to the stores for curbside pickup. That should be available on the Smart Plant Home app sometime late next week. Once available, that option is free to retailers for 120 days, and all the revenue goes to the retailer.

I caught up with Smart Plant Home CEO Bert Wahlen earlier this month to see what prompted

the partnership. “We started out as a plant identification app. At the time there weren’t that many on the market, but there are a ton now,” he says of the app’s start four years ago. “The thing that was a bummer is out of a million downloads, we had a 1% engagement. What was missing? My initial approach was I have to find what links me to that younger consumer.”



They added the ability to drag plants into a digital garden so users could receive local expert advice on plant care for what they owned (not necessarily what they purchased), which dramatically improved engagement. Bert began to investigate ways to better serve users, which resulted in collaboration with Home & Garden Fulfillment to provide an ecommerce option and by purchasing The Perfect Plant, a digital company that allows users to search for plants, as well as identify pests, weeds and diseases online through a participating garden center’s website and via an in-store kiosk.

How can IGCs benefit? Bert says once they are a licensed provider, all plant and product inventory is uploaded to the platform, allowing customers to scan bar codes at the garden center for product information and upload plants to their digital gardens. When a customer scans a plant on-site, the app changes to feature that store’s home screen and other information. Retailers can also send customized notifications to users in their ZIP code.

IGCs in the program receive the data the app gleans from its users about the plants they are scanning, their likes and dislikes, plant care issues and other patterns. “This is a tremendous amount of data that’s not been available to our industry before,” Bert adds. You can read the full media release HERE.

Little Prince Helps with Online Sales

Creating online revenue seems to be the way to go while the coronavirus crisis still exists. And if you think you need a tech whiz on staff to handle the situation, think again. Little Prince Nursery of Oregon has a solution for getting plants into your customers' hands that doesn't require you to call your tech guy—nor your banking guy.

You do need to do some social media work, however, which is simple enough. The program is called Garden Center 911 and all you have to do is refer your customers to the Little Prince online store via your social feeds, email marketing or other digital maneuverings. And you'll receive 20% of the purchase price on sales from your referral. While garden centers are restricting face-to-face contact, forms of payment, employee hours and the like, this revenue stream will allow you to get cash in the door with very little effort on your part.



Here's how Garden Center 911 works:

- Fill out this FORM and be approved for the program.
- You'll receive an individualized referral link to www.littleprinceplants.com/ to share digitally and will point to your business as the referrer.
- Share this link on your socials, website, e-newsletters, YouTube channels and by all other digital methods available. Your messaging should communicate that customer purchases still do benefit their favorite local garden center.
- You'll receive 20% of the price of the plant purchases via that referral link.

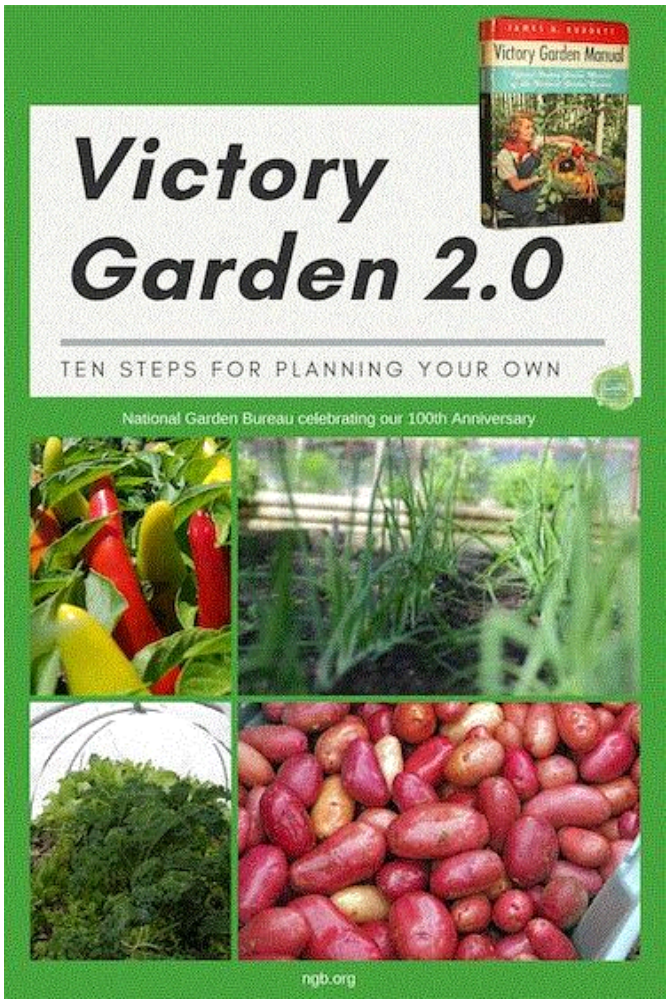
Yeah, it's that easy. A really good point they make is that while you may be open but focusing your offerings on veggies and edible plants, partnering with Little Prince allows you to not worry about missing out on the sales of ornamentals. You'll be able to offer your customers something, and you'll get a little income coming in without the hassle of unloading trucks.

I bet you have questions. Mark@littleprinceoforegon.com will have answers for you and will get you on your way with this new revenue stream.

Speaking of Edibles …

Many garden centers are being placed in the "essential business" category by their state ag department because of their food gardening products—the plants themselves along with fertilizers, soils and such. If that is you, I say go for it! Many folks see this crisis requiring social distancing lasting well through the spring, and wouldn't it be nice not to have to don gloves and masks before heading to the local grocery?

What a perfect time for the modern day Victory Garden to become a thing! And the National Garden Bureau truly is leading the consumer marketing side of it, that's for sure. Did you know that the person who literally wrote the book on the original Victory Garden campaigns during the World Wars, James Burdett, was NGB's founder?



NGB is back at it with a series of four blog posts, to begin. Post #1 gives folks the 10 steps of planning and preparing for the season's veg garden—find that post HERE. NGB's executive director Diane Blazek tipped me off on the topics of the remaining three posts so retailers can plan and anticipate for their customers:

- Blog #2: Planting
- Blog #3: Care and Maintenance
- Blog #4: Harvesting

And here is the SIGN-UP LINK so you can get NGB post notifications directly into your inbox.

By the way, Diane says NGB has created social media graphics to go along with each blog post. Use the post! Use the graphics! Here's just one example below. NGB has a bunch more. Diane assures us that this information is there for all of us to use, free of charge.



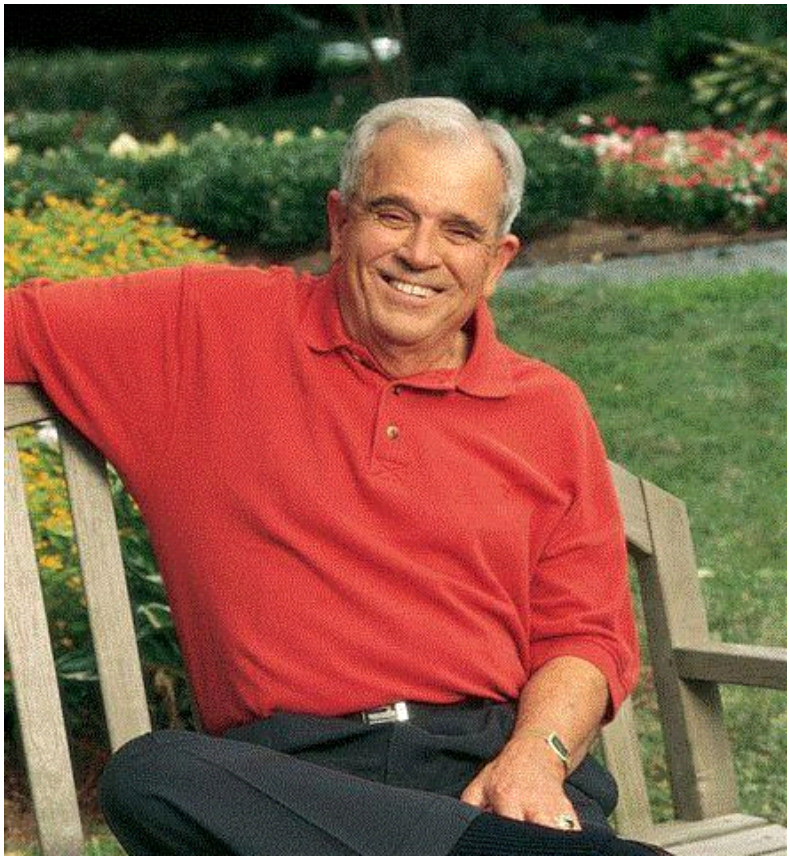
“It’s working already!” Jen Polanz had responded to Diane’s email to us about Victory Garden 2.0, including a link to this *New York Times* piece from Wednesday. I do think the message is getting across. Both Pike Nurseries and Armstrong Garden Centers e-blasted about planting Victory Gardens earlier this week, and I heard that Debbie Foisy of Deb’s Greenhouse in Alberta teamed up with local landscapers, hardware and building supply stores to begin “The Great Garden Project of Sturgeon County.” Click on this graphic to see the details:



What I love about all of this is garden centers and garden organizations have readily taken the lead to educate the population and alleviate fear about something that may seem all too precarious at the moment—our access to food. And in uncertain times, helping create a “yeah, we’ve got this” feeling is just so important. You know, you’re probably already on your way to creating this. So proud of you if you are.

Pete Pike Passes

With all this attention on COVID-19 this past month, I unfortunately haven’t mentioned the passing of an industry icon, William “Pete” Pike, founder of Pike Nurseries. Pete passed away on February 28 at the age of 90.



What he started as an uncomplicated 200 sq. ft. location in Marietta, Georgia, with three employees has grown into an 18-store “Southern institution” with 500 employees. Pete had become interested in the nursery business in the mid-1950s while working at Lymburner’s Nursery on a part-time basis while also serving at the Naval Air Station in Chamblee, Georgia. I’ve noticed that a lot of the great garden centers of today were started by former service members. Must be something about their dedication, loyalty and a “don’t give up the ship” perseverance.

We send our sincerest condolences to the Pike family.

CASTing Calls

If all had gone well this month, the Bobbleheads and I would be beginning our California Spring Trials adventure today. While Trials will likely happen in some digital form from each individual breeding company this year, there was one company planning on taking that course of action all along. Recall that Proven Winners had decided not to participate in the 2020 Spring Trials. They have instead already recorded loads of videos and organized lots of other digital tools for presenting their new variety information to customers.

Proven Winners has given folks this sneak peek at how they'll be showing their new varieties to the world—click HERE to find out what they have planned. Just a heads up—from Saturday, March 28 through April 1, Proven Winners will be launching one video each day highlighting an essential product they think you'll really want to know about. Smart! It would have coincided with CAST anyway. And then starting on May 4, Proven Winners will premiere a long-form video that will train folks in all the details of their products. My question is, when will Dave Konsoer finally get a talk show on Bravo?

Ball Horticultural Company has been pulling their new stuff together for their "SimulCAST20, a virtual California Spring Trials experience." It's slated for two duplicate airings, Tuesday, March 31 (9:30-11:30 a.m. CDT), and Wednesday, April 1 (2:30-4:30 p.m. CDT).The two-hour webinars will feature new product presentations, video footage and live, interactive Q&A opportunities with the experts from the following breeding companies and brands: PanAmerican Seed, Kieft Seed, Wave, Ball FloraPlant, Selecta One, Darwin Perennials, Ball Ingenuity and Burpee. To register, visit www.ballhort.com/springtrials/simulcast20. Select the date you wish to participate and tune in when your event is scheduled. Not available those days? No worries! A recording of SimulCAST20 will be made available. Our fearless leader Chris Beytes will be at the webinar controls, as well.



What Do I Think?

I was recently listening to a Good Life Project podcast with guest author and activist Glennon Doyle recorded sometime in late February. And while the topic under discussion had nothing to do with pandemics, a quote from Glennon described perfectly where we are in this moment in time. She said something like, "We are all asking each other directions to a place none of us has ever been."

I take that to mean there are no right answers, no one way that will ensure we will all turn out okay. What we are given and the path we choose forward will lead us somewhere, and that "somewhere" will be exactly the place we need it to be. Not everything will survive unscathed. All of us will have nicks and bruises, if not a whole new way of life after this is over. But get there by following the path your gut tells you to follow.

As Chris Beytes says, "Stay positive but test negative!" Comments, questions, suggestions? Send 'em to ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
Green Profit

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