

How to adapt to the new retail normal, plus new variety considerations

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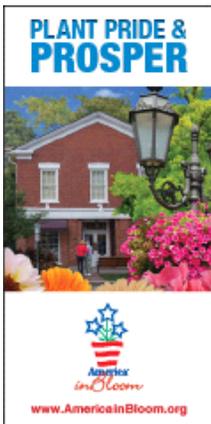
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THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2021

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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- New Catalog
- New Plant!



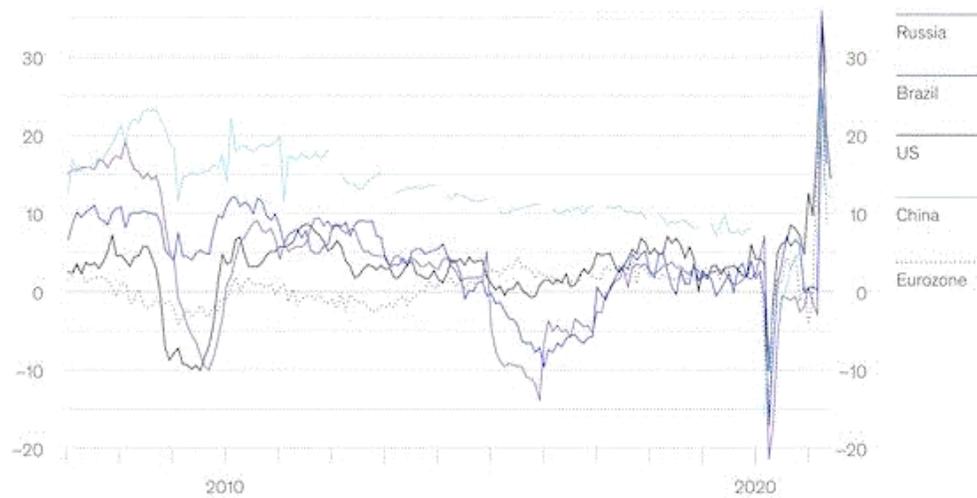
Gearing Up for Another Round

The Delta variant has thrown a wrench in this summer's reopening of businesses and work spaces. Not that I see a lot of just-reopened businesses closing yet again. It may be more accurate to say it's thrown a blanket over the confidence of people who tasted a few brief months of freedom outside of their homes. Generally speaking, of course. And you and I both may have that sinking feeling that Epsilon is waiting just off stage and gearing up to say, "Delta, hold my beer."

The odd thing with this new wave of coronavirus outbreaks is how it contrasts with the previous waves, in that this time the increased numbers of cases is bobbing right along with increased consumer demand, strengthening global industrial activity and a growing interest in trade engagement—as we've seen within our own industry's interest to get back out there for in-person business and networking opportunities.

Consumer demand has returned in most surveyed economies, with retail spending now approaching prepandemic levels.

Retail sales growth,¹ monthly year-over-year change, %



¹Data through May 2021 for Brazil, eurozone, and Russia. Source: Central Bank of Brazil; Eurostat; National Bureau of Statistics of China; Rosstat; US Census Bureau; McKinsey Global Economics Intelligence analysis.

As a country, we're back to being under the virus's thumb but in a different way than previously. At the moment the surges in cases and severity are generally regional. Whereas last year's pandemic problems impacted our industry across the board, we instead must prepare for this wave's impact to threaten some of us more than others. We won't be asked to pivot as a group like we did the first time around, but perhaps by state or locality. The question we have to ask ourselves, even perhaps on an individual business basis, is how will we help other folks in our industry this time around?

Want to read up on how COVID-19 has impacted global business? McKinsey put together a number of updates about it, all of which you can access [HERE](#)—just click through on the “downloads” and the executive summary for July.



Retail Has Changed

Whether we are wanting it to be or not, retail *will* be different from this point onward. Physical stores need to adapt to how customers now want to shop. And according to a recent [POSTING](#) by the commercial contractor company Cicero Construction Group, this will mean more than sneeze guards at registers and 6-ft. distancing stickers placed on floors. As retail businesses retool their structures to better meet their customers in their place of shopping comfort, Cicero advises companies to consider these retail strategies:



Coherent Brand Identity: It's about a consistent brand. Whatever structures or policies your store implements, it needs to be fully stitched together across the store(s) and should add to your strong visual brand identity.

Make Safety Permanent: Replace temporary sneeze guards with permanent designer glass. Working protective elements into the aesthetics of a space will help safety feel more natural, and it won't affect the overall customer experience.

Social Distancing: This could include widening aisles, reducing clutter to open space and having a one-way flow of traffic. Remove racks and shelving from the middle of the store to help people stay further away from each other. Utilize real plants and functional art as partitions to create a safe distance between guests that feels intentional.

Air Quality: Upgrading air filtration systems and installing windows or taking down interior walls can also help flush out stale air.

Safer Surfaces: Copper and other anti-microbial materials should be incorporated wherever possible in high-touch areas of the store.

LED Lighting: One way for stores to feel welcoming and safe is LED lighting. Not only does LED lighting improve the customer experience and make merchandise look more appealing, it can reduce electricity costs by as much as 60%.

Dressing Rooms: Makeover small dressing rooms to accommodate social distancing and other preventive measures. This means cubicles being expanded and the walking space widened.

Multiple Entrances: By adding another entrance or two, retailers encourage customers to spread out in a store as they come in and begin their shopping journey. (This may necessitate additional security/shoplifting measures.)

Touchless Technologies: Thermal scanning and contactless POS/self-checkout systems will become more prevalent, along with automatic sliding doors at storefronts and self-service wherever possible.

Pick-Up Areas: Many retailers have already introduced separate areas for online pick-up. It is only a matter of time before we see loading areas being repositioned for customer pick-up coordination. In areas of the country that are prone to adverse weather, retailers might want to cover pick-up areas for driver comfort.

Fear-free Spaces: The key is a balance of conveying to shoppers that they are in a pristine space, but without it feeling sterile. Incorporate wood grains and a softer color palette to add sophistication to an airy environment. Shades of grassy green bring fresh pops of color into the space, while hints of earthy clay and natural metals throughout add underlying balance and warmth.

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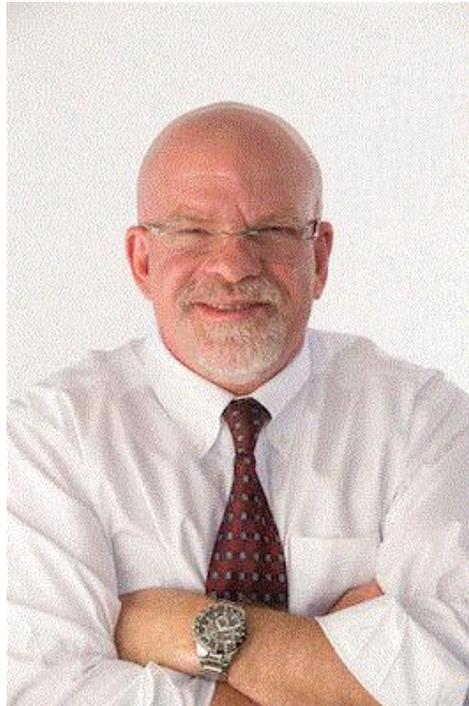
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Orlando and Dr. Hall

If you're feeling uneasy about any of the above and are looking for a clear-headed viewpoint from a trusted individual on what could possibly lie ahead for you (both "you" you and "business" you), I've got the guy and the event for you. Dr. Charlie Hall of Texas A&M is set to deliver the keynote presentation during the [Kick-Off Breakfast at SAF Orlando 2021](#), the organization's annual convention, happening September 21-23.



Feeling uncertain? Sure, that's a hard feeling to address (and one maybe better spoken to by [Brené Brown](#), another fiesty Texan). But from the floriculture business perspective, Charlie's your go-to human on the topic. During his "Searching for the End of Uncertainty" presentation, Charlie will help break down the opportunities and challenges facing the industry. Those would be such things as:

- **How several factors** such as globalization, trade policies, supply chain disruptions and technology **are affecting the way consumers shop and how much they'll pay.**
- The **changing role** of the traditional florist.
- The increased importance of **vertical coordination between segments.**
- The **consumer behavior trends** guiding these insights.
- The differences between **the pre- and post-pandemic economy** and how floral marketers should respond.

Join Charlie Hall and all the other education session leaders at the Loews Royal Pacific hotel in Orlando for the 136th SAF convention. Find out registration details and COVID protocols [HERE](#).



NHS Four Ways

Maybe you're headed to Las Vegas in October for the 75th edition of the National Hardware Show. And the thing about this edition of the show is that they're offering a few options. Said NHS Event Leader Beth Casson in a press release about this iteration: "While the world has changed significantly since our last visit to the Convention Center, NHS has adapted to remain the primary hub for hardware and home improvement communities to stay connected—be it virtually or in-person."



I've written about the new goings on that NHS is offering a few months ago, but as a reminder, the options are:

In-person National Hardware Show, October 21-23, at the Las Vegas Convention Center with updated health and safety guidelines.

NHS Connects: The year-round digital component that has been delivering thought leadership, global insights and sourcing opportunities all year.

HABITAT: A platform that NHS will offer both online and on-site at the event. It explores new ideas and technologies, and promises to "keep a trained eye on how the hardware and home improvement industry can rise to meet the ongoing changes of our world."

PUNCHlist: This is NHS's bi-weekly editorial newsletter highlighting trends, culture shifts and the like from prominent companies and leaders. (I just signed up!)

Registration for the live, in-person October 21-23 event is open now. You can sign up and get all the information about the "Kontaktless" Smart Event (e.g. your badge is a contactless reader!) [HERE](https://www.nationalhardwareshow.com). For more about the actual show, visit www.nationalhardwareshow.com.

Drilling Time

Let me take you back a few weeks to the open house at Pleasant View Gardens. I spotted a "plant-adjacent" product among the retail product displays set up by the Proven Winners folks. This is the Twist 'n Plant auger. The idea is to attach the auger to a power drill and drill planting holes in garden beds.



I've seen and used this technique a few years ago when a friend and I planted 5,000 fall bulbs. And as someone with the beginnings of arthritis, the auger I was using was a lifesaver (a wrist saver, more like it). Using it for other planting holes? Smart idea.

The Plant 'n Twist comes in two different lengths (not sure of exact measurements). They're even selling a drill on the Proven Winners [SITE](#) if you need one of those, too!

Try This Species

Here's another New Hampshire-related item. Professor Emeritus Richard Criley, "my man in the field" in Hawaii, saw my news item about my visit to D.S. Cole Growers. Their Zebra series of *Tradescantia* caught his eye and he wrote in to make a species suggestion:

"I thought I'd add this species, which we use as a ground cover, but which would make a nice potted plant. *Tradescantia spathacea*—the common name is Dwarf Canoe Plant (the flowers, when they have some, look a little like a tiny canoe). It comes in its normal maroonish color and several more colorful variegations. The photos below are from a collection at a local botanical garden.



A variegated version of *T. spathacea*



And another variegated version of *T. spathacea*

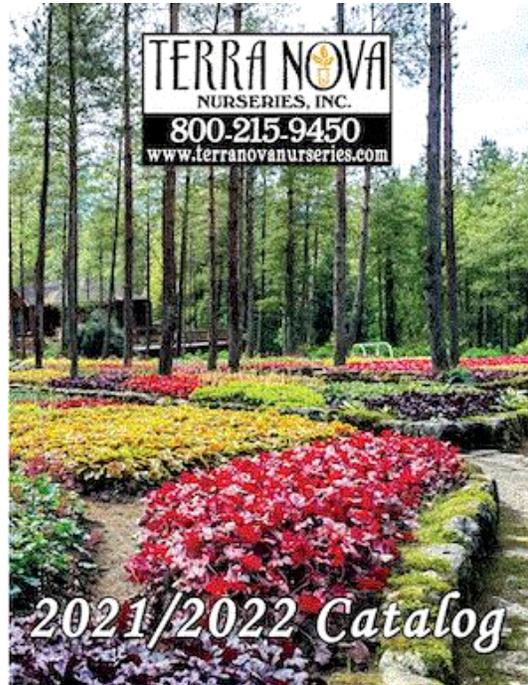
I think these are sweet and especially like the lighter plant. As I replied to Richard, if one were to have a heavily green indoor plant collection, these would give the eye something to rest on. I sounded quite artsy for a moment.

Thoughts? Comments? Experience with this species? Drop me a line about it [HERE](#).

New Catalog

Looking for other new varieties? You can find a whole bunch in the new Terra Nova Nurseries 2021-2022 product catalog, which they have just released. In it they've included 21 sections with up-to-date plant and breeding information, their Plant of the Year (Heuchera Black Forest Cake!)

and national trial garden results, along with information about grower problem solving, their multiple ongoing projects, sales contacts and their partnership with ThinkPlants.



Here's something cool—in the catalog you'll find out how they are reducing plastic usage by moving away from large plastic labels, and will now allow growers the choice to refrain from using Terra Nova tags typically required for patented varieties. Good move, Terra Nova.

You can request a printed version through your customer sales rep or broker, or save some trees and find the digital version at www.terravanurseries.com.

New Plant!

I didn't notice the Bidens Stellar Red Wing from Westhoff planted in my overly stuffed container until just last week. And that's because it's on the other side of the container, and just beginning to poke its head up through some petunias, jamesbrittenia and other stuff that are beginning to cascade out of the pot a bit.



Yes, this flower is resting its little head on a beet leaf. It's a serious mixed container.

According to the description that came with the samples, the new Stellar series “features robust plants with novel blooms. Whether a unique solid color or an eye-catching bicolor, Stellar bidens’ performance in the garden is out of this world.” I like that it stuck around despite some beefier plants. I’ve gotten a bunch of nice fillers from Westhoff this year. They are fun plants to pop into places that need some color. (And actually, so are beets and chard.)

I have about another three or four varieties I can feature from the sample plants I grew this summer. If you have some new varieties you'd like to share with readers, please do drop me a line about them at ewells@ballpublishing.com. Thank you!

Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ellen'.

Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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