

PW gets into foliage, plus lessons from Mickey and houseplant happiness



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# TROPICAL TOPICS

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

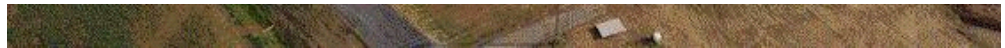
PW's Foliage Program  
Lessons from Mickey and More  
Controlling Succulent Branching  
Houseplants and Happiness



## Proven Winners + The Plant Company = New Branded Foliage Program

With so many new gardeners having entered the horticultural marketplace over the last two years (upwards of 16 million or more, we hear), you've got to do all you can to keep them interested. And as Proven Winners realizes, that interest should be sustained all year long. Houseplants and foliage are the perfect way to appeal to customers young and old, new and loyal from January through December. And that was the impetus for Proven Winners to get into the foliage market with a new houseplant program. They'd been collecting foliage genetics for a number of years but needed a foliage-specific production partner to bring those genetics (and more) to market under the Proven Winners brand—kinda like a songwriter needs a singer to bring the song into the world, right? That's where The Plant Company comes in.





But first, who is The Plant Company? Chris Beytes did a great job explaining the whos, whats, hows and wheres of The Plant Company in his latest *Acres Online*, which you can read [HERE](#). The long and short of it is this: It's a 5-acre of state-of-the-art greenhouse that went up this past January in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western Virginia and owned by Jason and Wesley vanWingerden, sons of John vanWingerden of Green Circle Growers and Express Seed, and joining them is Frank Paul, Jason's brother-in-law and former head orchid grower for Green Circle. They grow foliage year-round, from liners to finished and in the European way.



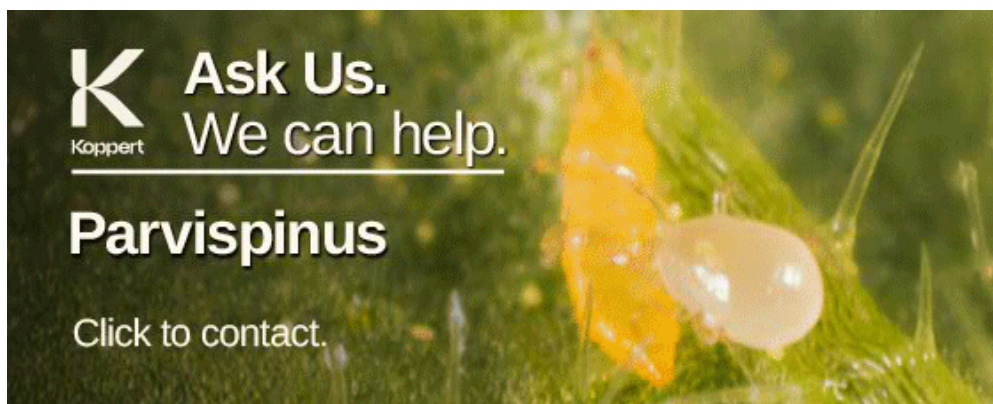
"Why Virginia?" was one of the questions Chris asked Jason. "We wanted to find an area where the climate was a better fit for foliage, where it's not so far south where you get the extreme heat during the summertime—that's why we picked Virginia, up in the Blue Ridge Mountains ... a higher elevation, better night temps during the summertime." And from my own thinking, they'll have better access to customers and all routes across the country (if anyone listened to the "How I Built This" podcast episode with Roxanne Quimby, you'll know that's one reason Burt's Bees moved from Maine to North Carolina).

What The Plant Company gets from the partnership is immediate access to the Proven Winners brand and marketing programs, synergies with existing Proven Winners licensees, their retail support programs, and inclusion in Proven Winners' trade and consumer marketing campaigns. Plus, they'll be able to tap into Proven Winners' direct-to-consumer e-commerce expertise and platforms.



For Proven Winners, they get a great new partnership with an awesome supply of foliage. Said Dave Konsoer, Director of Sales for Proven Winners, of the pairing, “By bringing a strong and up-and-coming houseplant supplier into the Proven Winners family, consumers will be able to find top-quality houseplants under a name they know and trust, resulting in an even stronger brand for retailers and consumers.” I reached out to Dave myself for news on marketing, positioning, packaging and the like, and his response was that this project was still so new, there’s nothing ready for a prime-time reveal quite yet. I can tell you though that The Plant Company will be selling more than 100 items exclusively under the Proven Winners brand as of January 1. Until then, The Plant Company is selling a great array of foliage and houseplant items on their own—find them listed as [Green Sprouts](#) on their website.

Will we see the new partnership at TPIE in January? I hope so! Meanwhile, direct your questions to [Dave Konsoer](#) or [Chris Ricci](#), director of sales for The Plant Company.



## Lessons from Mickey and More

I told you in the last Tropical Topics that I’d likely have some news about the keynote speaker for the upcoming Tropical Plant International Expo. And I do! It’ll be Duncan Wardle, former Head of Innovation and Creativity at Disney. Yes, that Disney! Duncan was one of a team helping Imagineering, Lucasfilm, Marvel, Pixar and Disney Parks to spread innovation like pixy dust. He helped these divisions of Disney create magical new storylines and experiences.



Duncan now uses his Disney expertise to help audiences around the world. Using a unique approach to Design Thinking, Duncan helps people capture unlikely connections, leading to fresh thinking and disruptive ideas.

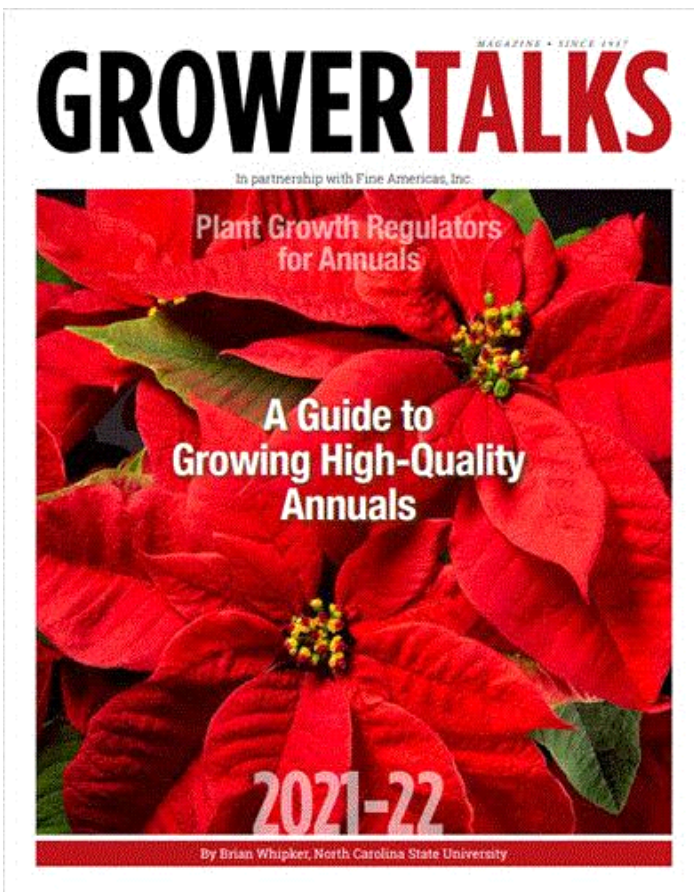
Join Duncan, your colleagues and me for the TPIE Opening Keynote, “Embedding a Culture of Innovation into Everyone’s DNA.” During the conversation Duncan will touch on what skills businesses and individuals need to rise and move forward in the middle of a decade of disruption. And where will it all shake out in relation to artificial intelligence? Find out Duncan’s viewpoint at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 19, at the Tampa Convention Center. Register for TPIE (taking place January 19-21) [HERE](#). And learn more about Duncan at [www.duncanwardle.com](http://www.duncanwardle.com).



## Controlling Succulent Branching

A little birdie said more and more growers are asking about how to control branching in succulents. That little birdie is Bill Calkins, a guy with his finger on the pulse of what growers are asking for and needing when it comes to production (Bill puts out Ball Publishing’s latest e-newsletter, Tech On Demand, and you can read his most recent edition [HERE](#)).

Turns out that controlling branching in succulents was actually a session offered at AmericanHort’s Finished Plant Conference back in October. *GrowerTalks* will be putting together an article based on that conference session, so keep an eye out for it sometime early next week (and if you forget to keep an eye out for it, I’ll gladly remind you!).



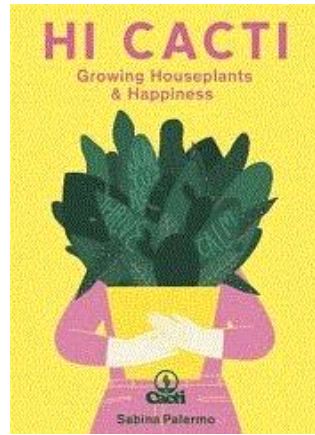
Meanwhile, you can check out the latest [PGR Guide for Annuals](#) for an article on using Configure to enhance growth in Sempervivum. Find that useful bit of info on page 69.

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## Houseplants and Happiness

We'll now turn from the grower side of things to the consumer with the book "Hi Cacti: Growing Houseplants and Happiness" written by Sabina Palermo. In it, the author encourages new and experienced plant lovers to say hello to 20 easy-to-love houseplants, and to say goodbye to life's stresses. Gosh, sign me up for all 20 then!



“Plant care is self-care,” a press release about the book from Leaping Hare Press suggests. “Spending time with nature reduces stress, anxiety and depression while boosting your immune system, reducing blood pressure, aiding sleep and improving concentration.” The book will guide readers how plant care moments—water, feeding and “simply appreciating plants”—can be mindful moments. What a neat concept—and one that people can really use nowadays. Also within the book, the author shares a care guide for those 20 houseplants, self-care rituals and meditations centered around plants, plant care troubleshooting tips, projects and much more.

Sabina Palermo is the founder of Hi Cacti, a botanical boutique in Brighton, UK. She runs a flourishing independent shop and online business ([www.hicacti.com](http://www.hicacti.com)).

Any suggestions, comments, questions or news to share? Just drop me a line at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

**Ellen Wells**  
**Senior Editor**  
**Green Profit**

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