

Products and Winners from Cultivate'23



THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2023

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

And the Winners Are ...
Retailers' Picks
The Next Three
The Last Two
Sneak Peek at Bailey Intro
Two of My Own
Here's the Other
Wash-Off Labels
EHR's New Sales Team
Member



And the Winners Are ...

During Monday night's Unplugged event at Cultivate'23, we crowned the next recipient of the *Green Profit/The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award* and the *GrowerTalks/Ball Horticultural Company Young Grower Award*. This year's winners are ... drum roll, please ...

Michael Fiore, vice president of Smith's Gardentown in Wichita Falls, Texas, took home the Young Retailer Award and Matthew Tyson, area grower for Costa Farms in Miami, Florida, was bestowed with the Young Grower Award.



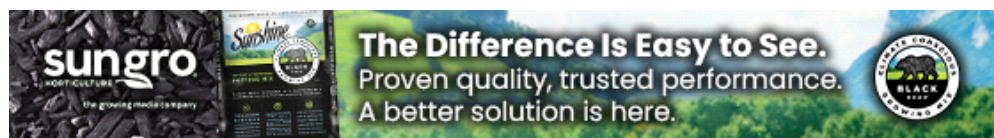


From left to right: Elora Wannop, Laura Reese, Matthew Tyson, Emily Kellett, Michael Fiore and Samuel Di Rito

Michael and Matthew were two of the six finalists (three finalists each) for the two awards. The other finalists on the retail side were Samuel Di Rito, Assistant Manager/Social Media Manager at Collier's Greenhouse and Garden Center in Jackson, Georgia, and Emily Kellett, co-owner and founder of STUMP LLC in Columbus, Ohio. Joining Matthew as finalists were Laura Reese, grower for Green Circle Growers in Oberlin, Ohio and Elora Wannop, head grower at Brookdale Treeland Nurseries in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada.

This was the 18th rendition of the Young Retailer Awards, and we have The Garden Center Group's sponsorship to thank for that. And thanks to Ball Horticultural Company, this was the 19th year for the Young Grower Award. AmericanHort, the folks behind everything Cultivate, were sponsors for both awards, as well.

You are or you know someone who is 35 or younger, a resident of either the U.S. or Canada and wants in on all the Young Retailer/Young Grower fame and accolades. How do you make this happen? Nominations for the 2024 awards are now open! Begin the nomination process [HERE](#) for retailers and [THERE](#) for growers. And you have plenty of time—nominations are due March 1, 2024 (but don't wait, do it today!).



Retailers' Picks

The Garden Center Group and their crew of volunteer retailers scoured Cultivate's hundreds of booths for items they believe would do great at retail. With more than 70 items chosen by the team, just 15 were given the Retailers' Choice Awards. As always, their keen eyes found some great products. I'll include half today and the rest next week.

Peppers from Heaven from Burpee. With its mounding and trailing habit, this is truly a basket pepper. Available in Red, Orange and Yellow, these compact plants bear sweet fruit all season long. I love the mixed colors together. One way to sell out of these would be to grow them until close to harvest. Who could resist a basket like this?



Cercis Garden Gems Amethyst from Star Roses and Plants. This is a compact redbud that is meant to take center stage. Use it as a focal point in a small garden or have it in a pot on the patio. Its burgundy color and compactness means it can easily fill in for a Japanese Maple. Its spring blossoms are pink and attract pollinators.



The Next Three

Echinacea Double Scoop from Darwin Perennials. The four new colors in this double echinacea series are what I call Jolly Rancher colors—Strawberry, Watermelon, Raspberry, Orangeberry Deluxe. The 2-ft. tall compact habit means they can shine at the front of a mixed border. These deer- and drought-resistant varieties have better branching and higher flower count than other doubles. Zones 4a-9b.

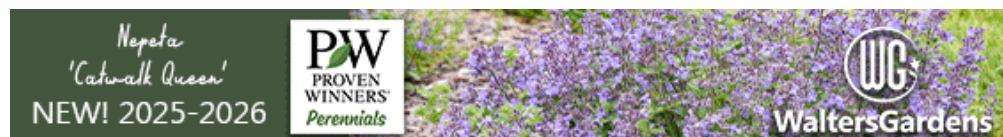


Centaurea Silver Swirl, another from Darwin. Stunning silver-white leaves really brighten a space. Great idea for a night garden, too. The wavy leaf edges give it some texture, too. This one is drought tolerant and rabbit resistant, and tops out at 1 ft. It would look great in a combo. Zones 6b-9b.



Look how nicely it pairs with the Double Scoop!

Aspidistra Tokyo Skies from Plant Development Services Inc. This Cast Iron plant is an item that'll add a bit of brightness to shade and part-shade gardens. It's a tough, water-wise, evergreen plant that tops out at 2-3 ft. tall and just 1-2 ft. wide. Zones 8-9.



The Last Two

Cherry Go Round Bigleaf Hydrangea from Bloomin' Easy/Van Belle Nursery. What an amazing color! This is a compact reblooming variety, growing to just 2-3 ft. tall and wide. The deep red blooms are held on thick and sturdy stems. Zones 5-9.



Eclipse Bigleaf Hydrangea from Bailey Nurseries. After much secrecy and suspense, Bailey's Eclipse made a grand appearance at Cultivate'23. I'm going to let colleague Jen Polanz tell you a bit more about this first-of-its-kind dark-leaved bigleaf hydrangea in the item below.



Retailers with real-time data platforms are
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EPICOR



Sneak Peek at Bailey Intro

Colleague Jen Polanz shares some intel from a trip to Bailey's Georgia facility.

The team at Bailey Nurseries had a busy week in June, bringing in waves of people to their Bailey Innovations facility in Athens, Georgia. First it was their international team, then their brand ambassadors and, to conclude the week, trade and consumer publication editors.

It was grand to see friends in the industry and take a day-long (albeit a bit toasty) tour through the breeding process at Bailey Innovations, which also included the introduction of the gorgeous, first-of-its-kind Eclipse Bigleaf Hydrangea to the First Editions line-up.



David Roberts, Director of Plant Breeding at Bailey Innovations in Athens, Georgia, gives us trade and consumer editors a rundown on propagating hydrangeas.

What makes it the first-of-its-kind? The dark purple, almost black leaves, which stay dark and don't fade to green. Even in Athens' sustained heat and humidity, the leaves were much darker than the leading competitor, which is a florist hydrangea from Europe. Eclipse is hardy down to Zone 5, and up to Zone 9, showing moderate growth at 3- to 5-ft. tall and wide. Eclipse is scheduled to make its retail debut in the spring of 2024, just in time for the solar eclipse (April 8, 2024).

The folks at Bailey are super pumped about the intro, and wanted to make sure they highlighted just what it takes to get something as cool as Eclipse. Spoiler alert: it takes years.

We got an inside look at everything happening at Bailey Innovations, and there's a lot of work happening now to determine releases for five to six years in the future. We spoke to Director of Plant Breeding David Roberts, who showed us how they make their crosses by hand-pollinating hydrangeas. Then they collect the seed capsules for harvesting, which essentially looks like dust when sprinkled onto media to propagate new plants.

They grow on more than 30,000 seedlings for evaluation. They whittle it down to about 14,500 plants to grow out in 3-gal. containers, and if any show signs of disease they are pulled—the goal is disease resistance through genetics. Those remaining are sheered down about halfway through summer to gauge reblooming, which is a necessity in hydrangea breeding today.

Of those left, only about 1% will be selected to move on to further trialing and use in new

crosses, based on favorable characteristics (it could be bloom size, leaf quality, color, bloom type like picotee or double flowering). And, before you ask, the rest of the plants go to the compost pile, no exceptions. That's a hard thing for plant lovers, but it's a necessity to ensure the genetics don't get out into the public.

Once a plant has been selected as a potential intro, it still has to undergo rigorous trialing in Athens and other parts of the country to make sure it is a rebloomer that can withstand different climates and stressors. And it doesn't just have to perform in the garden, it also has to be able to plug into different production practices for the grower, which adds another layer of trialing. Finally, for an intro to be successful there has to be stock built up to meet the demand, so that adds even more time to the process.

Seeing the process laid out step-by-step gave me a new appreciation for what it takes to bring a flowering shrub to market—I can't even imagine the process for trees! Thanks so much to the folks at Bailey Innovations for giving us the inside scoop, and while I can't divulge all the cool stuff I saw there, I can say, we're in for some fun stuff coming out in the next couple of years!

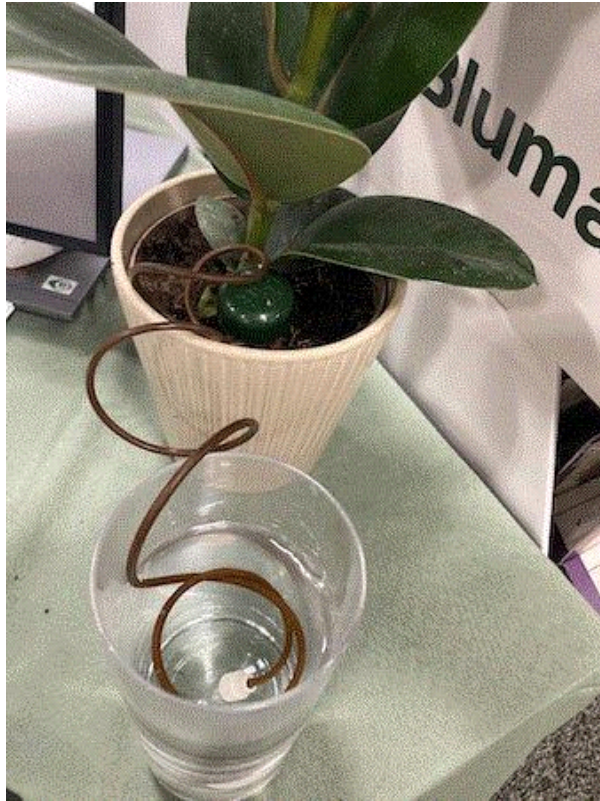
Thanks, JP!

Two of My Own

I have a lot more than just two items from Cultivate to share with you, but I'll pace their introductions over the next few weeks in no particular order. The first one is the Blumat watering systems from [Sustainable Village](#). These watering systems use a clay cone, which you insert into the soil near the plants' roots—whether that's in a pot, a raised bed or in the ground. The cone regulates how much water is released depending on the soil's moisture level. Blumat offers solutions for everyone from consumer to professional level, indoors and outdoors. The two products that are perfect for retail sales are the Blumat Easy—a clay cone that comes with a plastic bottle adaptor—



and the Blumat Classic—a clay cone fitted with a thin tube that siphons water from a jug.



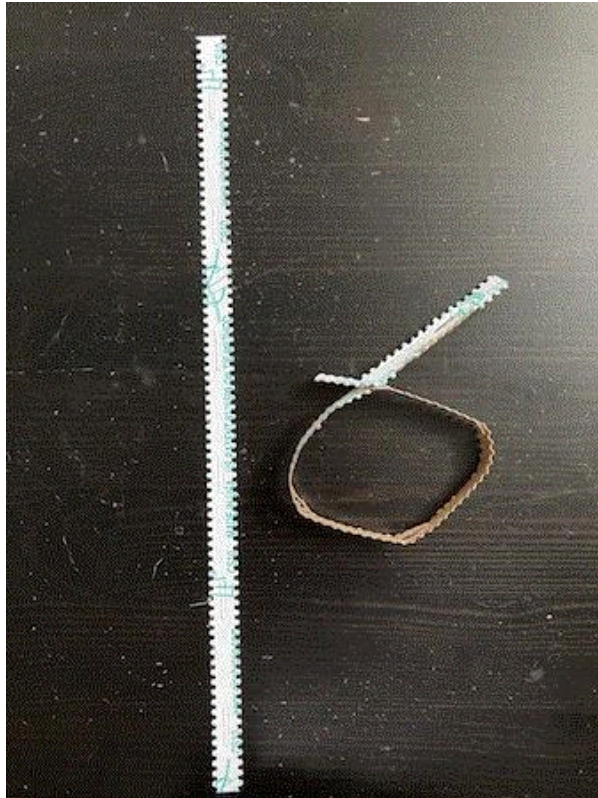
Both are good ideas for folks on vacation or who just forget to check on their plants on a regular basis. Their larger systems suitable for raised beds, gardens and even smaller indoor growing operations work on the same principles.



They also have a more decorative version of the Blumat Easy that instead of using a plastic bottle has a decorative glass globe.

Here's the Other

Compostable and adjustable zip ties from **Boa Fang**. No wires, no plastics, nothing that won't break down to nothing in a year or two. Customers are looking for sustainable products like these!



The very enthusiastic gentleman I spoke to about the product sees this being used in a number of ways. His main emphasis is the tree nursery/orchard/vineyard market where tying up branches to trellising is a laborious affair. These zip ties also come in a roll that can be inserted into a tie-dispensing gun for speedier application. He tells me he's adept enough at tying these that he can keep up with a gun!

But the consumer gardening market is another place that can benefit from the Boa Fang, such as tying tomato vines to stakes or supporting rose vines. Gardeners don't want non-degradable stuff accumulating on and in their soil. These'll be gone within a year. For nurseries that need a tie that sticks around a bit longer, he has a product that is coated with a corn or soy film that will last through the elements for about two years before breaking down. He told me they have "a 10 lb. strength," and while I wouldn't suspend myself from a steel beam with these ties, they do seem strong.

Wash-Off Labels

That's enough for Cultivate'23 topics for today, but let's stick with the sustainability topic for this

one.

Did you know that labels that are hard to separate from glass, plastic, aluminum, etc. can make that item's recyclability difficult or impossible? And when something is difficult, it doesn't make economic sense for recyclers to continue to accept those materials. The recycling circle begins to collapse. Not good.

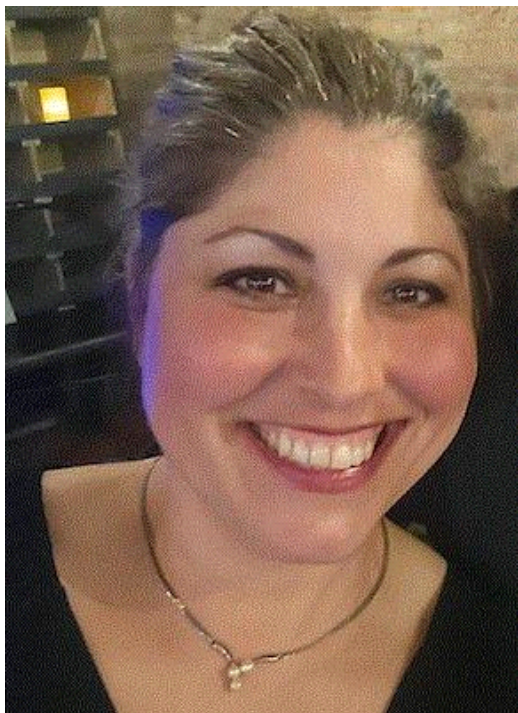


In come wash-off labels. They've been around for a while—since 2008 for some label makers—but the price of using them can be a hard stop for some brands. However, compare that cost to the cost of being viewed by customers as not having a recycling-convenient product.

If you don't know how these wash-off labels work, Packaging Dive just **POSTED** a great explanation of the product and the process. You "how's it made" geeks will be intrigued. You marketers and business owners will begin to understand how not using wash-off labels could color your customers' views on just how eco-conscious you are.

EHR's New Sales Team Member

Summer seems to be a popular period during which to bring on new or promote current employees, at least in the horticultural trades. Eason Horticultural Resources did just that last week when they hired Leah Heiden onto their National Sales Team.



In this position, Leah will service customers in Northern and Central Illinois, as well as southern Wisconsin. Leah has had nearly 20 years of experience in horticultural distribution with Syngenta Horticultural Services, Vaughan's Horticulture and Henry F. Michell's. Through that work she has demonstrated a commitment to providing a high level of service and creative solutions to greenhouses, garden centers and nurseries.

If you're in that area and need one of your horticultural problems solved, you now have another person in your contacts to call. Congrats, Leah, and I am sure you'll be kept busy.

Farwest Features

If you didn't get your fill from Cultivate or haven't gotten a chance to visit a summer trade show yet, the Farwest Show is coming up August 23-25 in Portland, Oregon, and it has something for everyone and anyone, no matter your job in the industry. And if you sign up by July 31, you can save up to \$40 on the all-class pass.

Classes on all the good and necessary stuff are on the [SCHEDULE](#) and cover topics including plant pests, climate resiliency, soil and water quality and pesticide safety. And speaking of pesticides, you can earn up to 10 hours of pesticide recertification credits from Oregon, Washington, Idaho and California, too.



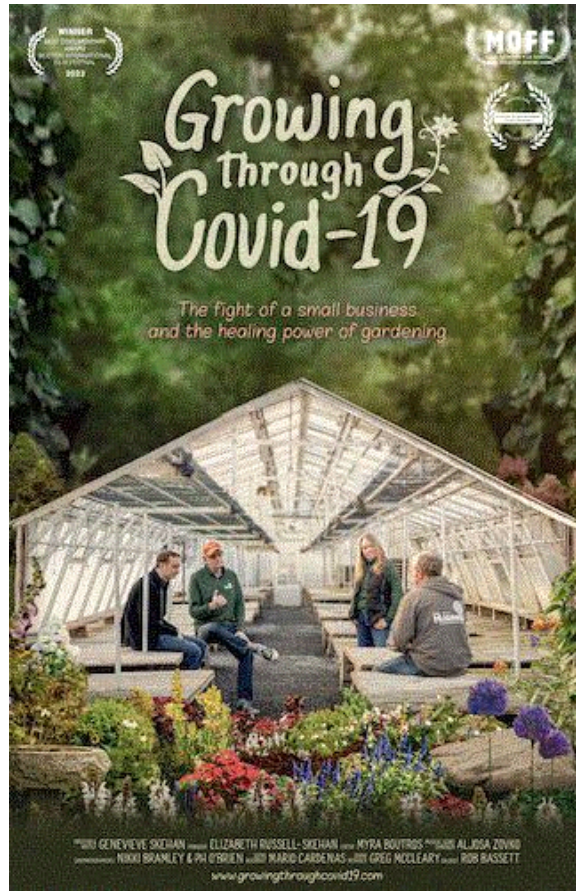
And if you get into Portland a day early, there is still room on the all-day retail garden center tour bus happening on August 22.

Other happenings of note include the New Varieties Showcase, the New Products Showcase, the Emergent afternoon networking event, Farwest's 50th Anniversary Celebration and Happy Hour, the Women in Horticulture event and the Farwest Pub Crawl. Find out more at FarwestShow.com and register [HERE](#).

Finally I

If you are heading to Maine at the end of July for a little R and R (it says "Vacationland" right on its license plate, after all), you'll want to see the documentary, "Growing Through Covid-19", a film created by our industry's own Russell's Garden Center. I've mentioned the film a few times before, the last giving it congratulations for winning the "Best Documentary Award" at the Boston International Film Festival this spring. It's now headed to Portland, Maine, as part of the Maine Outdoor Film Festival.

If this is the first time you are hearing about this movie, it's the story of the family and staff at Russell's Garden Center (Wayland, Mass.) who helped the 140+-year-old, 5th generation family business power through the worst of the 2020 pandemic to come out on the other side having their biggest year ever.



The Maine Outdoor Film Festival focuses on the beauty and complexities of this wonderful planet of ours, so you might want to check out what other films will be showing, too. "Growing Through Covid-19" is playing at Maine Studio Works in Portland on Thursday, July 27 at noon. To watch the trailer or purchase tickets go to the [MAINE OUTDOOR FILM FESTIVAL](#) or click [HERE](#).

Finally II

A philodendron, a handbag and a film star. How are these all related? The actress and singer [Jane Birkin](#), who is most famous (to me) for the song "Je t'aime ... moi non plus," was reportedly the inspiration for the famous (and very expensive) Hermes Birkin Bag. The Birkin philodendron, I am told, was then named after the Birkin Bag for a similarity in its general silhouette. Or, perhaps whoever named it may have wanted the plant to have a certain high-class air. At some of the prices I've seen for plant Birkins, both of my hypotheses may be true.

For someone who rarely carries a bag for fear of leaving it behind, the actress-bag-plant connection was unknown to me until I heard this weekend's news about the passing of the bag's namesake. Maybe this weekend you can set up a small memorial for Jane alongside your Birkin houseplant display and see if any customers catch on.

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



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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