

Meet me at MANTS, plus PW takes on hibiscus, talking shrink and how were poinsettia sales?

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

“Tell Readers About This”  
PW ColorChoice & Hollywood  
Hibiscus  
How Were Poinsettia Sales?  
Wage & Benefit Results!  
Speaking of Jen  
Talking Shrink Again  
And Again  
Dreamy, Unusual, Beautiful



“Tell Readers About This”

That was the subject line of the email I invited readers to send me in last week's *buzz!* I had a couple of folks who took me up on that offer, and I think they are definitely worthy of mentioning.

**Stem & Vine:** MANTS attendees, take notice! Quincy Goldsmith, Stem & Vine's owner, wrote in to tell me about this freshly open combo plant shop-wine bar. The shop is having its well-timed soft opening this week. A little about the place from the press release Quincy sent to me:

“The city's latest lifestyle destination, Stem & Vine celebrates its soft opening, unveiling an inviting collection of global plants alongside a carefully curated selection of artisanal wines and spirits. Straddling Downtown and Baltimore's cultural heart, Mount Vernon, this unique space combines a plant shop, wine bar, and bottle shop to offer a distinct gathering place for plant and beverage enthusiasts... Stem & Vine aims to be a hub for discovery and connection. The soft opening features engaging workshops and events on plant care, botanical sciences, wine and spirits appreciation, culture and the arts. As the grand opening approaches, planned expansions include an art-filled lounge, tasting room, educational space, and a 3-story atrium ...” The shop is hosting a Rosy Soil get-together tonight (Thursday) beginning at 5:30 p.m. and tomorrow they will be open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. if you want to check it out. Check out their [WEBSITE](#) for the address.



**Green and Growin’:** The Green and Growin’ Show happens at the Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons and Greensboro Coliseum January 15-19. The education component is January 15-17 at the Sheraton, while the marketplace takes place at the Coliseum January 18-19. I see my friend Leslie Halleck is the keynote presenter on Tuesday—double the reason to attend this event! This seems like a great opportunity to brush up on some trainings, see some tool demos and meet up with other professionals in the area. Learn more about the event and register [HERE](#).



## PW ColorChoice and Hollywood Hibiscus

Before I get to the header topic, I want you to know that I did indeed make last-minute arrangements to attend MANTS (which reminds me, I still need to register!). Thanks to an ill-timed dentist appointment I will be attending Friday only. I'll be hitting as many booths between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. as I possibly can, but if you want to chat either before or after the show (or at Stem & Vine, which I plan to visit Friday afternoon), please drop me a **NOTE** and we'll pencil each other in.

Back to the topic of the header. Spring Meadow will be adding J. Berry's Hollywood Hibiscus to its catalog of Proven Winners ColorChoice flowering shrubs. This strategic partnership between Spring Meadow and J. Berry will ensure seamless access to the Hollywood Hibiscus varieties through Spring Meadow's growers as well as the existing network of Hollywood Hibiscus licensed growers.

Spring Meadow's general manager Jeremy Deppe had this to say about the partnership: "Both Spring Meadow and J. Berry are family-owned nurseries that aren't afraid to invest heavily in new genetics. We both recognize the value that superior plants bring to the industry, so this partnership is a natural fit."

Proven Winners ColorChoice Hollywood Hibiscus will continue to be grown at J. Berry facilities in Texas. Retailers with J. Berry Hollywood Hibiscus currently in stock will continue to sell through current inventory, and new liners of Proven Winners ColorChoice Hollywood Hibiscus will transition to the Proven Winners white containers with the distinctive diamond-shaped hang tag.



I received a bunch of other breaking news from Proven Winners, including the addition of mangave and spring bulbs. But I'll wait until next week to tell you all about those, after I get the in-person scoop from them at MANTS tomorrow.



## How Were Poinsettia Sales?

You may have seen Bossman Beytes mention poinsettias in his [last Acres Online](#). Specifically, he wanted to know how the past poinsettia season had gone for growers as a sort-of Poinsettia Season Sales Report. I've been asked by the same hort industry worrier to ask you, the retailer, how you viewed your own poinsettia sales—sales to consumers, not growers' sales to folks like you.

"My fear," the worrier wrote to me, "is growers moved a lot of product and could be happy, but that some of that product never went out the retail door." He's got a point. So, let me ask you what Chris asked readers in Acres Online: How was your poinsettia season on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is "they were clamoring at our doors!" and 1 is "well, at least my compost pile is happy."

Send me a score and some notes [HERE](#). Be sure to include your state(s) or province(s). And also include an explanation of your score, including your customer base, pot sizes and so on.

From a personal perspective, I haven't purchased a poinsettia in a dozen years or more. It's not my thing. I like plants that stick around for a while (like my 32 year old Christmas cactus). I

might be about to say something blasphemous, but if poinsettia sales are down, might we spend some time looking into what consumers would rather buy? I mean, [top hats](#) used to sell, too, but we've moved on.



## Wage & Benefit Results!

*Green Profit's* annual Wage & Benefit Survey (15 years!) is out and ready for you to see where your company falls in the wide range of salary and benefit offerings. Colleague Jen Polanz reported on the crunched number from what you submitted (if you are a survey respondent, we appreciate you!). The results? One major finding from the survey is that almost all categories increased in how many retailers offer options like medical plans, life insurance, sick leave, paid vacation and 401(k) plans, among other perks. Offering bonuses didn't increase, and JP suspects it's because that was already a highly offered perk.

Another interesting survey finding is that wages held steady or increased just slightly. And a new category in this year's survey—driver salary—might make you want to hit the road.

Read all about it [HERE](#).

And, another thing—you'll see the survey results are a bit different this year. One reason is because we partnered with AmericanHort and research firm Industry Insights. A more robust data set will be available to AmericanHort members for free via their member portal. Not a member? Visit [americanhort.org](http://americanhort.org) to sign up.

## Speaking of Jen

Jen Polanz is seeking out retailers who are anywhere along their journey to being more sustainable. If you have just started a sustainability initiative at your company or have put the finishing touches on one, she'd appreciate you reaching out to her so she can learn more about your sustainability story. Some companies take on a new initiative every year, in which case you could talk about what you've previously completed and what you'll be working on this year and in future years.

Drop Jen a note [HERE](#).

## Talking Shrink Again

Last week I had shared some interesting information from the folks at management firm McKinsey about retail shrink. Remember that? If not, you can read it [HERE](#). Two of our industry's most-respected consultants replied with some additional views about other aspects of and perspectives on shrink that we often overlook.

The first to weigh in was [Ian Baldwin](#). He advised to not get too caught up with the "security"

aspect of slowing/stopping shrink. “A badly trained or underperforming buyer can cost the company a lot more than shrink does in a year,” he pointed out. “Undercapitalized buildings, poor merchandising, negligent plant care and a lack of inventory discipline will cost even more! Shrink, including theft, dead inventory and ‘unknown losses’ is still a fraction of the labor bill. Improving productivity should easily pay for increased shrink losses and make 2024 a great year!”

Ian then added this little gem: The best security in retail is having staff actually talk to customers. I do appreciate his perspective of “it’s not all about the lock down.”

## And Again

I was excited to see Sid Raisch of [Advantage Development](#) weigh in on the topic of shrink—times three! Sid offered three different perspectives on shrink. The following form of “shrink” is one that can be a prickly topic because it touches on raising prices (gasp!). Here’s what Sid had to say about it:

“Shrink of Perceived Value: Another form of shrinkage is the revenue we miss out on by undervaluing our prices. This is perhaps the largest form of shrink in our industry, over time. The fear of raising prices can be paralyzing. Most Independent Garden Center (IGC) owners would rather face the dentist, public speaking, or even death than hike their prices. Yet, operational costs are constantly rising. I’ve seen a recent industry survey indicating that in 2024, 22% of IGCs don’t plan on raising prices. This is a recipe for financial disaster. The remaining 78% who intend to increase prices are unlikely to match the actual cost increases of the past four years. Worse, they are not setting prices at levels customers would willingly pay. It’s essential not to be reckless with price hikes, but ignoring economic realities out of fear is a dangerous game. Seeking advice on price adjustments and implementing them in ways that customers barely notice can make a significant difference.”

I will share Sid’s other two perspectives on shrink in the following weeks, but as a teaser let me say one involves great emotion and the other asks us to recognize we sometimes make mistakes.

Great advice and perspectives from both Sid and Ian, but I advise you to approach a consultant first before you take any of the perspectives above and run with them on your own. Consultants are professionals and can best address your situation when they have your specific details to work with.

## Dreamy, Unusual, Beautiful Homesteading

After a week or two off, we are back to sharing the search terms that [National Garden Bureau’s](#) Pinterest followers are using. This will give you a good idea of what folks are looking for and planning for once spring has sprung.

And it looks like folks are interested in homesteading. The search term “1-acre homestead layout” increased 60% compared to the previous 30 days, while “5-acre homestead layout” increased by 30%.

The search term “unusual plants” is up 200% over the previous 30 days. And as I would like to

point out, anything can be labeled “unusual” if you spin it the right way. Maybe that is a hashtag you’d want to start using?

“Very beautiful flowers” is also one of those subjective and spinnable terms. It popped up in this graphic showing the global growing trends of Pinterest users following NGB:



Also notice the increase for the search terms “wildflower garden” (73x) and “dream garden” (60x). I take these search terms to mean that folks are hoping to garden, but spend effort doing so by having low-maintenance, natural-style gardens. At least that is how I am interpreting “dream” garden, as in something wispy and unkempt but still beautiful.

Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

Ellen Wells  
Senior Editor  
Green Profit

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