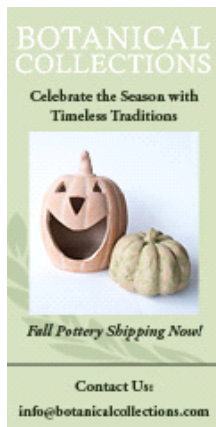
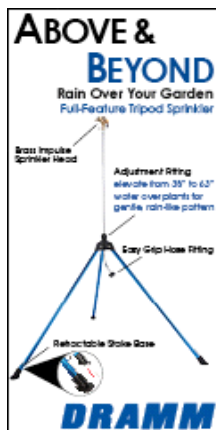


Southern spring, plus a palooza, billboards and an auto-flow webinar



THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2024

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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NGB's Pinterest Trends
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Webinar Alert!
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CAST Is Coming



Southern Spring Has Sprung

Not where I am, of course, although my tulips have emerged an inch or so from their winter hibernation. I'm talking about for the folks in the way down South. My call for spring progress updates garnered responses from Texas and North Carolina. Here's what was going on last week for Debra Pings, who is working at a garden center in the Houston, Texas, area:

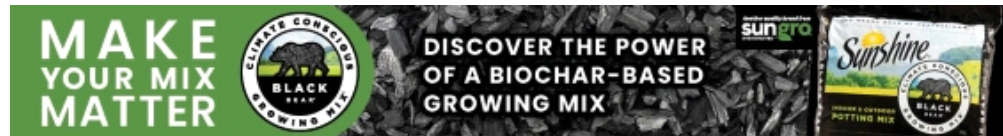
"When the weather is warm and sunny we are swamped with people. Yesterday was 50 and rainy. Very few customers in person, but the phones never stopped ringing, and we had about seven trucks come in. Our unloading area is full, and we have five trucks today. I love spring in the garden center. It is like Christmas every single time a truck shows up. Today will be 70 and sunny. And the weekend is looking good. For reference I have lived here two years now, and am from Wisconsin. My friends there are dreaming and planning of what spring might be. I am living it right now."





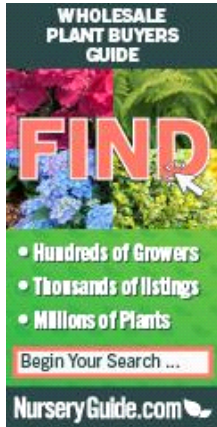
Judy Mitchell of Mitchell's Nursery and Greenhouse in North Carolina wrote in to say spring is clicking right along with highs up to 71F and lows as low as 30F. "Still, it is great for the last day of February," she wrote. "We are selling the last of the pansies from our last fall crop and new ones are getting ready. Shrubs and trees are selling along with the last of our perennials from fall. So far sales overall are up 15% over last year, but weather has been great overall with no snow this winter. This has been one of the warmest winters in memory." For me, too, Judy.

You folks in the Sierra Nevadas will surely be snorting at me, but for those of you where there aren't 10 ft. of snow on the ground (or tumbleweeds piling up in the parking lot), how is spring coming along? And, more importantly, what plants and products are in demand? Consider yourself to be the real-life Pinterest trends that help predict what will be in demand for your northerly peers in a few weeks. Tell me about your spring so far at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



This Week's Pinterest Trends

Speaking of Pinterest, this week's Pinterest trends from [National Garden Bureau](#) shows an interesting development. NGB's Gail Pabst has noticed over the last several weeks that the gardening trends are more about the flowers (snapdragon searches have been off the charts!) than about the veggies. With one exception: 5-gal. bucket gardening. That's a very specific



Pinterest search term, don't you think? And it's one that neither Gail nor I had encountered before. How about you?

You can see from the graph that porch flowers and specifically zinnias are increasing in interest (300% and 500% more than in the previous 30 days). The search terms "white gardens" and "beautiful flowers" lead me to believe that those folks are either new gardeners are unfamiliar with the flowers they could be using for specific purposes.

Trends in Planting

Percent changes are compared to the previous 30 days

white gardens ↑ 50%	porch flowers ↑ 300%
beautiful flower... ↑ 70%	zinnia garden ↑ 500%

The following two images list the top 14 searched trend terms that had the greatest monthly change from highest to lowest.

Keywords	Weekly change	Monthly change	↓	Yearly change
plant		100%	500%	3,000%
zinnia garden		10%	500%	300%
garden plots layout		-1%	400%	1,000%
bucket garden		30%	400%	20%
bucket gardening 5 gallon		30%	400%	20%
porch flowers		-1%	300%	100%
front porch flower pots		40%	300%	-20%

Keywords	Weekly change	Monthly change	↓	Yearly change
shade loving perennials		20%	200%	70%
pool decks for above ground pools		10%	200%	1%
pea trellis		20%	200%	-40%
backyard concrete patio ideas		40%	200%	100%
how to fill a raised bed		30%	200%	5,000%
diy greenhouse cheap easy		-40%	200%	-20%
pallet garden ideas		40%	200%	-60%

What the list says to me is that consumers are looking for solutions to questions that could be "how can I create a more efficient garden plan? How can I beautify my porch or pool, create something cool with pallets, add color to a shady spot and a thousand other questions. They are looking for solutions. Using these Pinterest trends, can you anticipate your customers problems and provide solutions?

Or, does this listing say something completely different to you? If so, drop me a note about it at

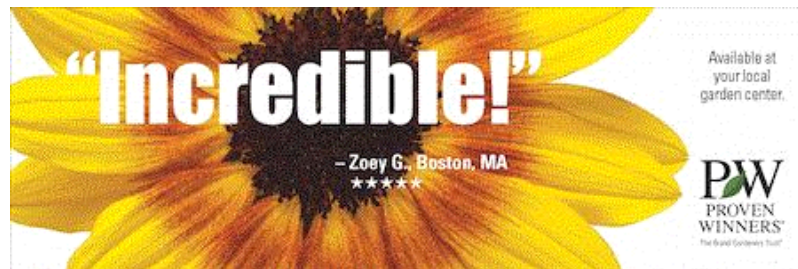


Proven Winners Billboards

As I was stuck in highway traffic last week I looked at the billboards and thought folks must be really bored with the same old messages from cannabis shops and car accident lawyers (I wonder if there's a correlation there). Considering that March 1 was right around the corner, I suspected I'd be seeing Proven Winners billboard advertising before too long. Something pretty to view from the highway.

I reached out to Marshall Dirks, Vice President of Marketing for Proven Winners to get a billboard update. Here's what he had to say about it:

"This year's billboard campaign is themed 'Local Impact,' with each board featuring a localized message and personalized review of consumers living within that board's DMA (designated market area). Inspired by the real reactions to the images posted on social media, these bright and colorful boards featuring a variety of closeup images that draw immediate viewer attention, and the five-star review from a someone 'in the neighborhood' echo a broader trend in consumer purchasing behavior—the power of online reviews. In fact, positive reviews can increase customer spending by 31%, and 49% of consumers trust reviews as much as personal recommendations from friends and family members." (That last line is information from a Brightlocal Survey from January 2023.)



I'm including the billboard for my Boston metro area, but there are other featured flowers in more than two dozen metro areas.

If there's anything Proven Winners knows how to do, it's marketing their plants in a very savvy way. Including reviews on billboards and other marketing materials is a smart way to go. Remember the "Yes Good" campaign from Emerald Nuts? That was a customer review. You can include reviews, too, and without the need for a billboard. Bench signage that includes staff favorites (and the reasons why) is a tried-and-true technique for bringing attention to products. Maybe ask some of your superstar gardener customers if they'd be willing to recommend some of their favorites, too.

Find out more about Proven Winners' billboard campaigns and in which metro areas they will be appearing [HERE](#).



Webinar Alert!

Clear your schedule for 1 p.m. Eastern on Tuesday, March 19, because I have a webinar suggestion for you that you'll really want to get in on. It's "How to Set Up Automatic Post-Purchase Emails for Your IGC!" with Katie Elzer-Peters (of The Garden of Words) and Deb Foisy (of Deb's Greenhouse). These two are getting together to bring you all you need to know about setting up your system so emails are automatically sent to customers based on their experience or specific purchase, or "automation flow" in technical jargon.



Deb Foisy and Katie Elzer-Peters, your webinar hosts

Why do you need such a thing? Wouldn't it be helpful to your customer if you could send them a digital care sheet for the Monstera they just bought? Or maybe warn those tomato plant purchasers that a last spring frost is coming and they better protect their plants? Having this ability is beneficial to the customer and it saves you from answering multiple calls/emails about the same topic.

Some of what they'll cover includes:

- What is a post-purchase flow?
- Why should you set them up?

They'll cover the set-up procedures for:

- Shopify + Klaviyo
- Square + MailChimp
- Square + Square email

And even if you have a different combination from those above, the information they'll provide will help you create your own emails whether your POS is "automagically" connected to your email provider or not.

Did I mention this webinar is free? Yep! They are offering this out of the kindness of their hearts and their wanting to see you succeed with automation flow this coming season.

Read more about it and sign up [HERE](#).



Speaking of Katies

Katie Dubow, president of [Garden Media Group](#), received the 2024 Green Achiever Award from the Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association at PLNA's 120th Anniversary Awards Luncheon on February 21. Congratulations, Katie, and well deserved!



Russell Redding, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Agriculture, presenting the Green Achiever Award to Katie Dubow.

"Katie personifies up-and-coming industry leadership. In fact, she is already making a splash," says PLNA Board Chair Rob McHale. "Katie is widely recognized as a green industry champion. She just started her third three-year term on the PLNA Board of Directors and is one of the first, if not the first, woman PLNA Board Chair."

"Receiving the 2024 Green Achiever Award means I'm someone who cares about the Pennsylvania horticulture industry and can share that passion with others," Katie said in a press release. "I am eager to help others in Pennsylvania and beyond enter this field, learn about horticulture, and find additional opportunities to grow."

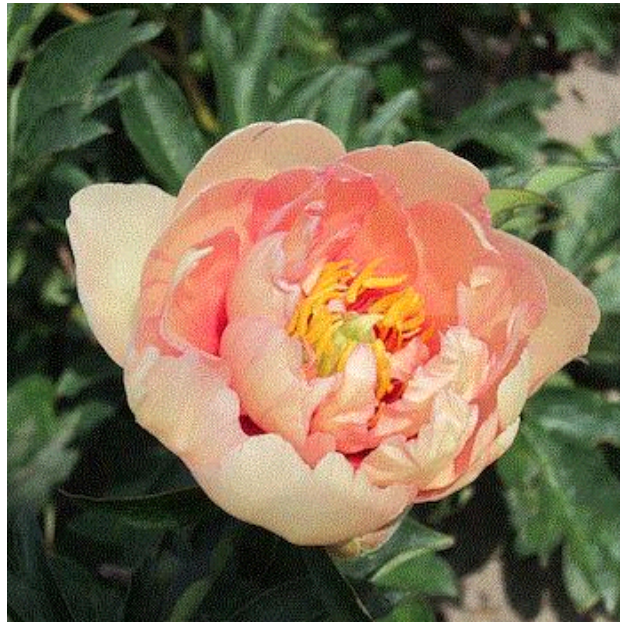
Katie, who took over Garden Media from her mother, Suzi McCoy, in 2020, is the author of the annual Garden Trends Report, which has become a must-follow chronicle of consumer lifestyle and behavior as they pertain to the home and garden category. I also depend on Katie and the crew at GMG for keeping me up on the latest offerings from their many clients. I thank you for that!



Peony Palooza

The word "lollapalooza" means "one that is extraordinarily impressive." And that's exactly what Liz Hughes and the folks at Groovy Plants Ranch in Marengo, Ohio, had in mind when they stuck "palooza" after "peony" and held an event at their garden center last year. I heard it was "extraordinarily impressive." So much so that they are holding their second annual Peony Palooza the weekend of April 5-7.

With more than 1,000 peonies in all sorts of colors and styles, it can be nothing other than super impressive. Other highlights of the event are hard to find varieties, including tree peonies, the extraordinarily impressive Itoh hybrids and some incredible collectible varieties; a local coffee truck and some extraordinarily impressive array of baked goods; the amazing collection of both houseplants and garden plants that Groovy Plants is known for; and the A-1 staff that can help customers sort out what's best for them and their gardens.



Peony Clouds of Colour is one of the "extraordinarily impressive" peonies you'll find at Peony Palooza.

Why am I telling you about this? It'll be a busy weekend for you at your own garden center, and so making it to Marengo might not fit in your schedule. If you're in the area, try to get there if you can. And if you can't attend, stay abreast of what they are doing via their socials ([FB](#) and [Instagram](#), for instance) and get some ideas for your own Petunia Palooza or Potato Palooza or Palm Tree Palooza. There are a lot of great garden centers out there doing some really creative events. ~~Steal~~ Borrow some of their ideas and the whole industry wins.



PPF Scholarships

If you're a hort student or recent grad with an interest in perennials, then perhaps you should throw your hat into the ring for this year's Perennials Plant Foundation's PPF Scholarship program. The program provides outstanding and promising students and recent grads with single-occupancy accommodations and fully paid access to everything taking place at this year's [PPA National Symposium](#) taking place July 29-August 1 in Asheville, North Carolina. You'll be able to meet and network with current members of the industry, benefiting from their experience and connections while seeing the wide array of career possibilities available for you to pursue. These opportunities for professional growth and mentorship extend beyond the symposium thanks to the connections you've made there.

What I like about this offer is that not only current undergraduate and graduate students are eligible. Folks who are recent graduates are eligible for up to two semesters beyond graduation. For other eligibility requirements and for the online application, click [HERE](#). Applications must be submitted by March 31. For questions, email perennialplantfoundation@gmail.com.

Rudbeckia 'Treasure Trove'
New to Proven Winners
Perennials for 2025-2026!



CAST Is Coming Up

I'm getting lots of emails from breeding companies about scheduling visits for the upcoming California Spring Trials (CAST), or "pack trials," as Bossman Chris Beytes still calls the annual new variety preview out in the Golden State. The five-day event takes place March 20-24—a bit earlier this year due to an earlier-than-usual Easter holiday. I am not attending, but my colleagues Chris, Jen Zurko, Bill Calkins and videographer extraordinaire Osvaldo Cuevas will be. Expect to see daily email and video updates from the Bobbleheads each day starting March 19. If you subscribe to *buZZ!* then you should automatically receive *Acres of buZZ!*.



If traveling along the California Coast from Los Angeles to San Jose (or vice versa) seems like a fun Spring Break to you, you can find all the exhibiting locations and hotel and eatery suggestions at Ball Publishing's [California Trials](#) page. Even if you visit a few stops, it'll be worth your while.

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



[Ellen Wells](#)
Senior Editor
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