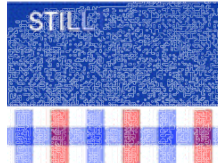
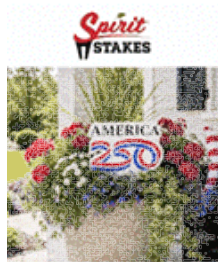


'24 hurricane forecast, plants for the Mid-Atlantic and what's trending



THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2024

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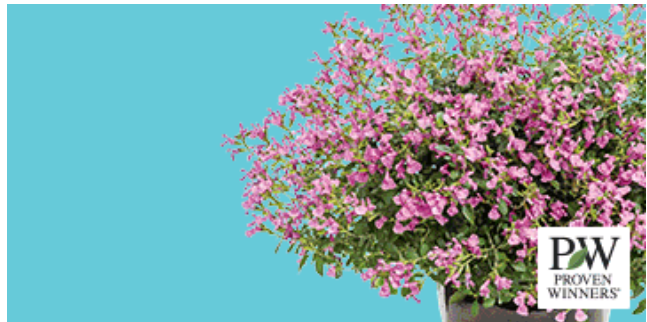
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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Whole Lot of Hurricanes
- Confidence is Up
- Mt. Cuba's Top Performers
- PHS Gold Medal Plants
- And By the Way ...
- Three Things
- What Terms are Trending



Whole Lot of Hurricanes

That's the forecast from the folks who predict this particular weather phenomenon. The [hurricane researchers based at Colorado State University](#) are predicting:

- Nearly 24 named tropical storms
- Around 11 hurricanes
- An accumulated cyclone energy of 170% of average

These hurricane researchers have a great deal of confidence in their forecast. That's because the Atlantic Basin's waters are more extreme than they ever have been, essentially guaranteeing a stormy season. Said the lead researcher on the coming hurricane season, "It would take something pretty crazy for the Atlantic to not be substantially warmer than normal for the peak of the season [August and September]. The signal certainly points quite strongly toward a busy season this year."



In this industry, a wet or rainy weekend or *weekends* can be a bad blow, but one you can recover from. Tropical storms and hurricanes are much harder on your business from a structural standpoint. Even though it's early April, now is a great time to consider what procedures and processes to put in place if and when a huge storm is predicted for your area. You may also consider some sort of educational offerings to customers about how they can protect their landscapes, prevent erosion and lessen the damage that storms and even heavy rainfalls can cause.

Do you already have a hurricane plan in place or ways to help your customers deal with storm-related damage? I'd love to know about it! Drop me a note about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Business Owner Confidence is Up

According to this [Inc.com article](#), small business owner confidence in the economy increased in the first quarter of 2024. The Small Business Index, compiled from survey results gathered by MetLife and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, rose to 62.3 from 61.3 in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Why? Nearly one-third of small business owners are feeling that the economy is in good health—that's an increase of seven percentage points since Q4 2023, and up 12 percentage points from this time last year. And these folks are feeling good about their own business's financial health. Two-thirds report they are doing well and they are comfortable with their own cash flow.

Not to be a downer—because the news above is pretty good—but the survey isn't all rosy. What concerns small business owners the most, or what they find the most challenging, is inflation—and with good reason, as [this Wednesday's inflation report](#) indicates it has risen for the fifth straight month. Revenue is also an emerging problem, according to the Inc. report, with 29% of those surveyed reporting it as their biggest problem, up from 22% in Q4 2023.

And what are the biggest threats on the horizon? Cybersecurity, supply chain breakdowns and another pandemic.

Now it's your turn: What is your confidence in the economy for 2024? What keeps you up at night? And a question that maybe wasn't asked in this Small Business Index survey—what do you have going for you this year? Drop me a note about it [HERE](#).

Mt. Cuba's Top Performers Hit Retail

Perennial are an increasingly sought after category with gardening consumers. One of the struggles these consumers have, though, is finding the natives in the sea of other items in the nursery yard or on the benches. For gardeners in the Mid-Atlantic, this is about to get easier.

Mt. Cuba Center, the native plant garden and research facility in Delaware, is partnering with Cavano's Perennials to offer Mid-Atlantic garden centers the Top Performer program. The program is recognizable with a purple tag that designates plants as ones that have performed exceedingly well in Mt. Cuba's rigorous multi-year trialing process.



Since Mt. Cuba began studying native plants and related cultivars for their horticultural and ecological value in 2002, the institution has evaluated and published 14 reports on various genera. The latest report features [amsonia](#), and other trialed plants include carex, wild hydrangea, echinacea, helenium, phlox, monarda, baptisia, coreopsis, heuchera and asters. If you want to check them out for yourself, you can view them all on [Mt. Cuba's website](#).

"We study native plants to inform home gardeners and the horticulture industry about plants that are most likely to succeed in gardens and provide attractive food sources for wildlife," said Mt. Cuba's Executive Director Jeff Downing. "Our Top Performer retail initiative is meant to take the guesswork out of plant shopping by identifying plants that have performed well over several years of close observation."

You can thank Cavano's for the Top Performer idea. In 2022 they approached Mt. Cuba about a collaboration after seeing consistent growth in the native plant category. Homeowners wanted natives but were having trouble identifying them when shopping at their local IGC. Mt. Cuba and Cavano's mulled it over and this Top Performer purple tag program was created.

If you are in the Mid-Atlantic and want to carry Top Performer native plants at your store, head over to [HERE](#) for more information on what varieties are available.

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PHS Gold Medal Plants

We have more great plant recommendations coming from just an hour north of Mt. Cuba Center at the HQ of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. That organization has announced its Gold Medal Plant winners. What I love about this list is that it includes an edible plant! Here are PHS Gold Medal winners:

***Asparagus officinalis* Millennium.** Millennium grows 3-5 ft. tall and 1-3 ft. wide. It is disease, deer and drought resistant. Zones 3-10.



***Illicium* Woodland Ruby.** Commonly known as Florida anise tree, Woodland Ruby has deep reddish strap-like flowers creating an extended period of bloom beginning in early summer and lasting through fall. It's deer resistant, fragrant and attracts pollinators. At a height of 6-7 ft., it's a good choice for a screen or backdrop. Zones 6-9.



Magnolia Genie. A great choice for small space gardens, its narrow columnar form fits

anywhere and can be grown in an extra-large container. It reaches only 10-13 ft. tall and 5 ft. wide. Zones 5-8.



***Cephalanthus occidentalis* Sugar Shack Shrub.** This more compact version of native *Cephalanthus* has fragrant, white, globe-like flowers in the summer, burgundy foliage in the fall and red fruit in the winter. It grows to 5 ft. tall and wide. Zones 4-8.



***Iris tectorum*.** Commonly known as Japanese roof iris, this iris has beautiful showy flowers in shades of lavender blue, bluish violet and blue lilac. It's deer resistant and grows to 12-18 in. Zones 6-9.



***Tiarella cordifolia* Brandywine.** Brandywine foamflower is an early season, long-blooming native perennial. It attracts specialist bee species and other pollinators, and it is great for small space gardens, containers and window boxes. Another deer-resistant variety, it grows to 8-18 in. tall when in flower. Zones 4-8.



Read even more about PHS's Gold Medal Winners [HERE](#).

Photo credit for all above photos: courtesy of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

And By the Way ...

Did you know that the [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#) was named to *Fast Company's* World's Most Innovative Companies of 2024 list? It's true! This year's list focuses on businesses that are shaping industry and culture through their innovations.



Fast Company recognized PHS for creating economic opportunity, forging health research partnerships, restoring Philadelphia's tree canopy and enacting place-based greening efforts to build communities. "We act to fulfill our belief that gardens, trees and great horticulture are must-have elements for every neighborhood in a thriving, equitable city and region. PHS invites everyone to embrace gardening as their superpower to transform our society and environment, a concept we call 'Gardening for the Greater Good,'" stated PHS President Matt Rader in a press release on the accolade. Read all the good *Fast Company* had to say about PHS [HERE](#).

Three Things to Read, Watch and Hear

In the vein of those trendy "what to read" or "what to watch" posts by all those newsletters writers out there, I've come up with my own this week.

1. The initiatives PHS undertakes to “garden for the greater good” came to mind when I read a *Washington Post* piece about mapping America’s access to nature. There’s tons of research out there that have found proximity to nature is a big influence on health. This article includes an interactive map, developed by a company called NatureQuant, that shows how accessible the beneficial effects of nature are neighborhood by neighborhood. Read all about it and hunt around for your neighborhood [HERE](#). It’s super cool!
2. I included videos from two CAST hosts last week and put out a call for other videos. Dümme Orange heeded the call and sent along a link to their video. It’s colorful, it’s got a great soundtrack and I love those bird planters! Watch it [HERE](#).
3. A few weeks ago Bossman Chris Beytes wrote about a glow-in-the-dark petunia line. No, it wasn’t for his April Fool’s edition of *Acres Online*—this stuff is real! You can read his initial report about the new Firefly petunias [HERE](#). Just last week he was asked to comment about this new and unusual plant on NPR’s Weekend Edition along with National Garden Bureau’s Diane Blazek. Good stuff! Listen [HERE](#).

If you have anything to read, listen to or watch (or whatever) and want to share it here, please do! Just drop me a note at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

What Terms are Trending This Week

Speaking of [National Garden Bureau](#), this week’s Pinterest trends among folks who follow the organization had the “f” word make an appearance, and by that I mean faux. Searches among NGB followers for “faux plants for front porch” are up 300% over the last 30 days. Hey, there’s a demand for them—and when there’s a demand for something, you fill it! Even if it’s faux.



Their followers are super interested in container topics, too. The term “container” or “pot” appear in six of the 11 search terms below. And folks are also getting ready for the season by searching for specific plants, too—climbing hydrangea, clematis, azalea and geranium, which also appears with the search term “pots.” Arm yourself with the knowledge and plants you’ll need as these searchers come through your doors in the coming weeks.





geraniums in pots

88x

more searches



climbing hydrangea

75.7x

more searches



clematis

74.7x

more searches



flower pots outdoor

64.9x

more searches



azaleas landscaping

52.6x

more searches



shade perennials

51x

more searches



container gardening

48x

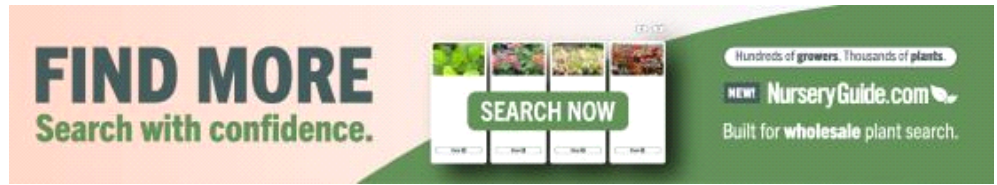
more searches

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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