

How creative can you get? Plus events in July and I can predict the future

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Get Creative

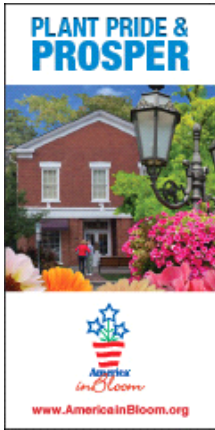
That was the message Danny Summers was communicating in a GROUPTalk email to The Garden Center Group members a few weeks ago. And now that we're on the back side of the spring rush, you may have a bit more time to dedicate to you and your team's creativity.

Danny's reminder to get our creativity caps on was prompted by an email he had received from the folks at Forest Lake Greenhouses in Florence, South Carolina, back in April. The enewsletter had invited customers to have their pictures taken with "Katie, the Garden Goddess!" just prior to Earth Day. Here's why you'd want to have a photo op with Katie:



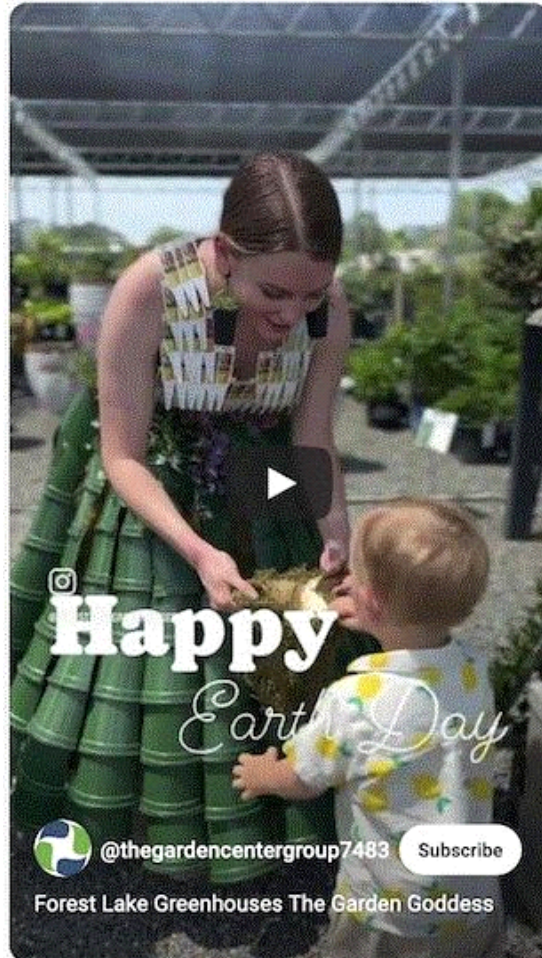
Have your picture taken with **Katie the Garden Goddess!**

Saturday, April 20th
 from 11 A.M.



How creative is this?! Danny contacted Laura Venable, Forest Lake's Marketing Director, to learn more about the origin of this amazing outfit. Laura had responded to Danny with, "We can't claim the Garden Goddess, it was all Katie's concept. She is a former employee of the greenhouses, but she has been working on this project for a while. Her retiring high school art teacher hosted a fashion show every year hailing outfits made from uncommon materials. Katie saved nursery pots and plant tags for some time to put together her dress for the exhibit! We thought it would be fun to have her in on Earth Day weekend to take photos with kiddos."

Here's a video of the Garden Goddess strolling around the garden center, and that little tyke is Lu, Laura's son. He was thrilled to meet the Garden Goddess!



I contacted Laura for a little more information about the custom dress. She went straight to the source—Katie!—to get the details:

"Making the dress took many hours during multiple long weekends! If I had to guess, it took maybe 20-30 hours, which includes a lot of reworking the dress structure and lots of sewing! This dress was a challenge for sure but in the most fun way. With the help of my husband (my engineering and sewing genius), I was able to overcome many obstacles. I used around 50-60 6-in. plastic pots, all cut to different sizes for the skirt, and 187 plastic plant tags. In addition, I used probably 3 pounds of sheet moss under the pots, shoe coverage and a bag!"

Also, Katie used an old bridesmaid dress as the base for the whole costume (now we know what to do with those old dresses!). The sheet moss is an excellent idea.



How'd It Go? What's Next?

I asked Laura and Katie a few more questions, such as:

Q. Any customer reactions you'd like to share? Did the Garden Goddess have an impact on customer count that you can tell?

From Katie:

All the customers that day made me so happy. I was a little nervous when I first got there because I wasn't sure if people were going to get it. They proved me wrong and my nerves went away instantly! The kids loved it as well. I had such a great time talking to people from the community and enjoyed seeing kids' faces light up with creativity!

From Laura:

Earth Day is in the middle of one of the busiest times of year for us, so we are guaranteed to have lots of foot traffic at that time. We wanted to have Katie in to show off her outfit and interact with customers and kids as a testament to creativity and sustainability. It was also fun to have her there to take photos with people! Katie took photos with lots of people and customer absolutely loved it, they would go up to her and just ogle over her beautiful dress, wanting to know all about how it came to be!"

Q. Did this inspire you/Katie to plan other creative opportunities for other events/holidays?

From Katie:

I love using creativity to bring an idea to life. This project has taught me that putting hard work into a creative idea is worth it. This whole experience with the dress definitely has me thinking about what I could do in the future. Not just with the dress, but with any creative idea I can come up with! I love sharing ideas and doing creative things with people as well as with kids! The sky is the limit, right?!



Check out the earrings and the purse!

Editor's note: It certainly is, Katie!

From Laura:

We definitely plan on hosting other creative events for future holidays. This might include interactive photo backdrops, scavenger hunts (finding "bees" or "butterflies" around the garden center for a \$5 coupon on International Pollinator Day as an example), or hosting sip and stroll walkthroughs of our wholesale greenhouses when the Poinsettias are in full color. We enjoy keeping things interesting and offering fun opportunities for the community to come out and get involved in an interactive and new way.

I can't wait to see what they come up with next! If you think you're not creative, think again. We all have a bit of artsy-fartsy in us. For some of us, we just need to nurture it a bit. I recommend a book called "[The Artist's Way](#)" by Julia Cameron to help you grow your creative impulses. And if for no other reason, go through this author's 12-week program to have a little fun. You don't know what you'll be capable of.

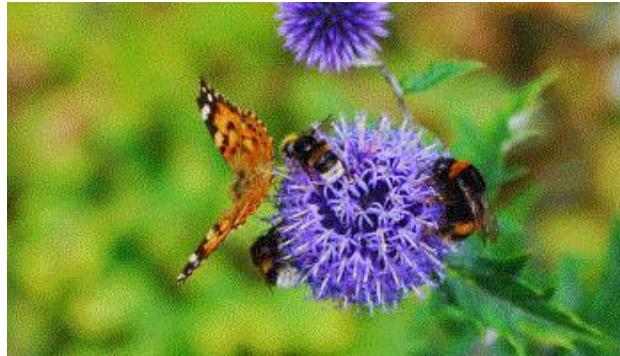
I can't wait to hear how you have used your creativity to have fun and engage with customers at your store. Drop me a note about what you have created along with some photos at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

Read Danny Summers' original post about the Garden Goddess on The Garden Center Group's Group Blog [HERE](#).



It's Pollinator Month!

Next week I have another Danny Summers GROUPTalk-inspired item that is focused on fun with pollinators. June is [National Pollinator Month](#), after all. And [Pollinator Week](#) is officially June 17-23, according to [Pollinator.org](#). I invite you to celebrate Pollinator Week any ol' time you want—I figure the pollinators can't read human calendars anyway.

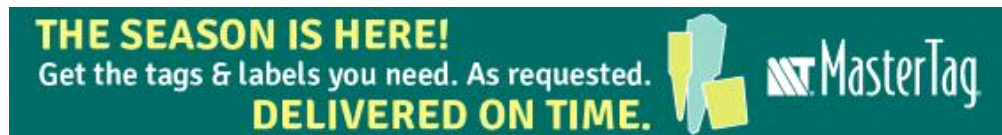


If you are super-committed to the pollinator cause, you may consider attending the 2024 North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) Conference October 22-24. It will be hosted by the [National Museum of the American Indian](#) in Washington, D.C.

This year's conference will feature 10 task force groups working toward specific pollinator-related goals for the year. Check out the full list of task forces [HERE](#). The event will also feature the NAPPC Awards presented to pollinator champions across North America. And submissions for these awards are still being accepted—nominate someone [HERE](#).

As a sweet bonus during the Conference, attendees will be treated to a guided walking tour of the Smithsonian Gardens around D.C. That's awesome.

Registration opens in July. Interested in volunteering for the NAPPC? Find out more about the organization [HERE](#).



Two Events for July

There are dozens of industry events in July, and I have room to include just a few here.

Dallas Arboretum Plant Trials Annual Field Day. If you want to know what plants thrive on the surface of the sun, head to Texas in July. I may be overstating that a tad, but it does get quite hot there. For dozens of years now the folks at the Dallas Arboretum have been trialing which plants can hack their heat and which are not up to snuff (and likely turn to snuff, too). The July 10 event will include trials results over the past year, presentations from industry professionals—and lunch and parking! Email mproska@dallasarboretum.org with questions and easily register for the event [HERE](#).

Blooms & Beyond: Exclusive Tour of Cincinnati's Botanical Gardens. From Dallas to Cincinnati via Columbus, Ohio, Cultivate'24 is offering a day-long excursion to and tour of Cincinnati's botanical sites with the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden Director of Horticulture Steve Foltz on July 13. You'll see not only the lush landscapes of the zoo and botanical garden but also tour around town to other horticultural locales, such as the Rockdale Academy School Garden and the Spring Grove Cemetery. Along the way you'll see some innovative plant trials, examples of community engagement and, as always on a tour, loads of inspiration for your business and your team. This tour requires an additional registration in addition to your Cultivate'24 registration. Find out more [HERE](#).



Speaking of Cultivate'24

Monday, July 15, at [Cultivate's Unplugged](#) event is where we'll be awarding the *Green Profit* The Garden Center Group Young Retailer Award. If you are not personally familiar with our three YRA finalists—McKenzie Lain of Watters Garden Center in Prescott, Arizona, Zachary Pitchford of Wilcox Nursery & Landscape in Largo, Florida and Jake Scott of Piedmont Feed & Garden Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina—we invited you to get to know them via their essays in the June edition of *Green Profit* magazine.



What question did our three young retailers answer to the best of their ability?

As a young professional, what can your generation teach the garden center industry about the importance of time management and work/life balance in your business?

Read their answers [HERE](#)—and be prepared to take notes, because you will have more than one “Ah, that’s a good idea” moment as you read along.

I Can Predict the Future

Not in any sort of Nostradamus sort of way, no. Maybe it’s more of a knack I have in recognizing a glimmer of something fun and efficient and therefore potentially a trend that will come into our lives in a matter of time.

That’s how I would categorize the recent Modern Retail post titled “[Definitely Not On My Bingo Card: Plants Are the Latest Live Shopping Trend.](#)” I have had livestream selling on my radar screen for a while, mostly from what I’ve seen going on in China and other parts of Asia. A quick search of my hard drive has me mentioning livestream sales as part of Alibaba’s Taobao Live livestreaming sales section in a [November 2019 *buZZ!*](#) edition. At the end of the piece I ask, “The question is—how can we translate Taobao Live into something that will compel gardeners to visit and buy from *you*?”

Fast forward to May 2024 and Modern Retail’s article on livestreaming plant sales mentions several livestreaming apps—[one that’s even just for plant sales](#)—as well as success stories and sales figures for several plant growers. Quoted in the article is Breann Hall of Texas-based tropical plant nursery Steve’s Leaves. Breann mentions that livestreaming offers their buyers a more accurate representation of the plants folks are buying than a static and small thumbnail on a website. That is a very good point. It’s also a good way to sell onesies and twosies of plants without having them sit all alone on a retail bench or even online under a “limited quantities” header. Livestreaming gives these plants more value.



A screenshot from Palmstreet, the livestreaming app for plant sales.

If you're interested in livestreaming, this article is a good way to learn how others are doing it. And if you have already done livestreaming, I'd love to know how it's going for you. Drop me a note about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

White's to Liquidate All Assets

Bossman Bytes informed you in a [February edition of Acres Online](#) that White's Nursery & Greenhouses in Chesapeake, Virginia, founded by the venerable Norm and Hetty White, would be closing after the Easter and spring annuals crops. Well, those crops are out the door and the time has come to put much of the business's assets up for auction.

SecondBloom Auctions will help sell White's greenhouse structures, equipment and nursery supplies. Other key assets include pot and flat fillers, planting robots, watering booms, carts, conveyors, trailers and a whole bunch more. The retail garden center portion of the business, White's Old Mill Garden Center, will still be operating, but the auction will have a few pieces of retail items such as display benches and other infrastructure.



A few of the items that will be available via auction.

While it's a sad move for the White family, the company's assets could be the spark that starts or expands your operation. The online auction is now open and will continue through July 1. You can take a look at what's for sale and make a bid by heading over to the [SecondBloom Auction website](#).

By the way, Bossman Bytes has an interview with Tal White, Norm and Hetty's son, about the closure and liquidation in this week's edition of *Acres Online*. It'll be out tomorrow (Friday) but [here's the general page](#) where you can find it when it does come out.

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

Ellen

Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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