

The Bee Man, get ready for goth and it's the backyard, baby

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

On the Small Business Front
And the Third
Cool As a College Cucumber
The Bee Man
Get Ready for Goth
Year of the Backyard

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On the Small Business Front

You're a small business, and you're interested in how other small businesses—horticultural or otherwise—are doing out there. Two small business-related items came through my inbox this week that provide a quick assessment of how it's going for your peers, as well as one item that'll help small businesses get some cash.

According to the Fiserv Small Business Index, small business retail sales for May were flat (up just 0.2%) over the previous month, but up a bit (4.3%) from May 2023. Foot traffic for the month was up 5.2% year-to-year, but down 0.5% from April. The category up the most was food and beverages (2.1%). Taking the biggest hits were building materials (down 1.1%) and furniture (1.9%). Fiserv's head of merchant solutions said in a [Chain Store Age piece on the topic](#), "The Fiserv Small Business Index provides insight into this critical ecosystem well ahead of other economic indicators, and the most recent index shows that consumers continue to spend at a

healthy, though slightly slower, pace.”



Next up, **small business jobs**. According to Paychex Small Business Employment Watch, the Small Business Jobs Index rose 0.46 percentage points to 100.58 for the month of May, the largest month-to-month increase since January 2022. However, hourly earnings growth slowed to just 3.13%, its lowest increase since June 2021. Weekly earnings growth was above 3% for May. That’s because workers were scheduled for more hours in May, hence the growth. Paychex president and CEO said this, “It appears we are seeing a stabilization in job growth and continued downward pressure on hourly wages. Yet, challenges still remain for small business owners given concerns over inflation, access to capital and a shortage of labor and skills.”

How’s spending at your store this year? How about wages? Drop me a note about either or both at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



And the Third

The Paychex CEO mentioned “access to capital” in the above section. If you need money to either make ends meet, carry out a necessary expansion or anything in between, many folks turn to a Small Business Administration loan. The SBA issued 63,000 in 2023, and maybe you’ll be one of those borrowers in 2024.



Need an SBA loan? Applying for loans of any sort can seem like a lot of work. This article from All Business has five suggestions for making the SBA loan process easier and less intimidating. Their tips are:

Do your homework: The more you know about your financial situation beforehand and your projected ability to pay off the loan, the better.

Know how much you need: There are several different types of loans, from \$50,000 to \$5 million. Write out a budget for what you'll do with the money in order to secure the loan.

Know your numbers: Keep your credit in good standing always.

Ask for help: Sometimes these loans and reports can become complex and the process is outside your wheelhouse. Stick to selling and growing plants and bring in a financial expert to assist with what may be beyond your abilities.

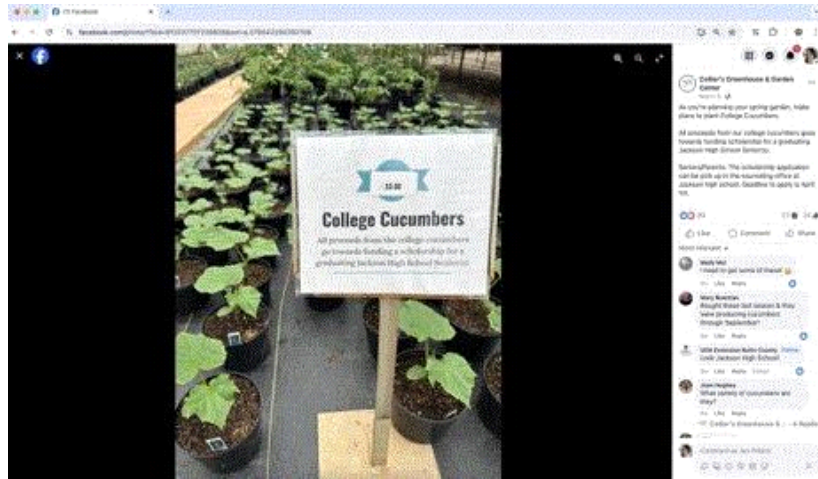
Invest in key person insurance: The success of your business and ability to pay off the loan may depend on one or two people. What if they (or you) are no longer around? Insurance will help cover that risk.

These five points are covered in much more detail [HERE](#). It's a quick read, and well worth your time to understand what you're getting into before applying for an SBA loan.



Cool As a College Cucumber

Thanks go out to colleague Jen Polanz who tipped me off on the following item. It's about Collier's Greenhouse and Garden Center in Jackson, Georgia, whose assistant manager/social media guru is Sam Di Rito, a 2023 The Garden Center Group/*Green Profit* Young Retailer finalist. In March Sam posted to the garden center's Facebook page about a promotion they run called College Cucumbers. The promotion helps to raise funds that go toward an annual scholarship given to a Jackson High School senior planning to go into agriculture or horticulture.



All funds raised from the sale of these cucumbers (aptly named Sweet Success) go toward the scholarship. I'm told that this year they've raised more than \$1,000.

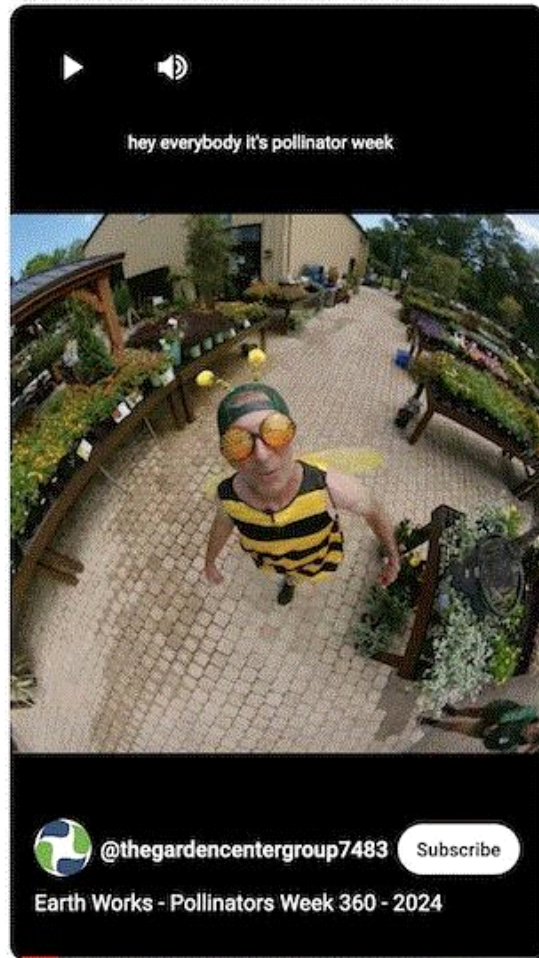
Such a great idea! Considering it is graduation season, I'd love to know if other garden centers have a similar scholarship program. Anyone? If so, drop me a note about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

A promotional banner for MasterTag. The background is dark green. On the left, the text 'THE SEASON IS HERE!' is in large, bold, yellow letters. Below it, 'Get the tags & labels you need. As requested.' is in white, and 'DELIVERED ON TIME.' is in large, bold, yellow letters. On the right, there is a logo for MasterTag, which consists of three stylized, overlapping shapes in shades of green and yellow, followed by the text 'MasterTag' in white.

The Bee Man

Following up last week's mention of the Garden Goddess's appearance at Forest Lake Greenhouses, I bring you The Bee Man, which was also a "get creative" feature in a [recent The Garden Center Group GROUPTalk newsletters](#) from Danny Summers.

The Bee Man is Matthew Barlow, Retail Manager for Earth Works in Jacksonville, Florida. Matthew willingly and eagerly dressed in a bee costume to create a promotional video for Earth Works' Pollinator Week events. Take a minute to watch [THIS VIDEO](#), then come back to read up on what Matthew had to say about it.



Cool, huh? Gosh, do you think Matthew had fun buzzing around? I emailed him and asked if he did.

"I hesitated at first when I was asked to play the part of the bee, but after a quick second, I decided that it would be a lot of fun. And it was. I just wish I had time to even out my farmer's tan before the shoot. It was fun being silly. As adults we don't allow ourselves many opportunities to just let go, be goofy and have fun like that."

Too true, Matthew! I asked about producing the video. The actual filming did take more than a half hour, "but the magic happened in the editing process," he wrote. "Sara Torres our videographer and film editor probably spent a few hours making the cuts and piecing the shots together."

I then asked if there had been any indications that customers had seen the video. "Absolutely," he wrote. "Just yesterday a couple came in and mentioned they've been watching our videos online and that's how they found us. I asked them, 'And the Bee Video?' 'Yes,' they answered, 'That one, too.' I wondered when they looked at me if they could still see me in the costume. We have customers who mention it, and then there are those who don't mention it, but when they see me a certain look comes over their face that tells me they've probably seen the video and they're giggling on the inside."

Earth Works' Marketing Director Terri McGregor had this to say about the video in Danny's newsletter: "Over this season, we have watched our interactions and views closely, and it is apparent that 1) Having our people's faces speaking on camera holds attention, 2) You must grab the audience within the first couple of seconds, and 3) The wackier, funnier, or sillier, the better."

Not only is the video fun, it's technically amazing in its videography. Danny's newsletter went into some detail about the types of cameras used and the tech involved in the video's production. You can learn more about that process [HERE](#).

Have you created some customer-engaging video content? Or, have you found another way to be ultra-creative in your marketing? If so, please share it with us at ewells@ballpublishing.com. I'd love to spread the inspiration.



Get Ready for Goth

National Garden Bureau's Gail Pabst sent along her weekly Pinterest trends with this introductory sentence: "Well, I am super excited about these trends because we have a blog on goth gardens! Think of all the fun plants retailers could highlight with these trends!"



bobo hydrangea

181.7x

more searches



spirea

180.7x

more searches



goth garden

132.8x

more searches



black garden

112.5x

more searches

Gail found that the search term "goth garden" increased by more than 132 times over the last 90 days for Pinterest users who follow NGB or have engaged with any of their pins in the last 90 days. The search for "black garden" had a similar increase by more than 112 times.

Back to that NGB blog post Gail mentioned. [THIS POST](#)'s Pinterest pin has seen an increase in impressions by 113%, increase in clicks by 74% and an increase in saves by 113% over the last 90 days. And the original blog post and pin date was in March of 2022. This proves the validity of evergreen content.

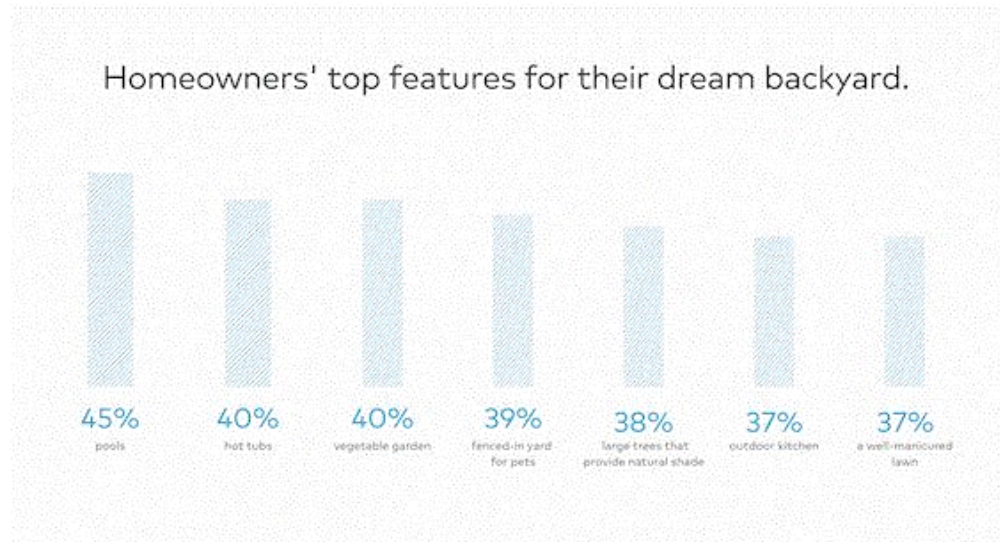


I also wanted to mention that first image in the same set of photos that includes the "goth garden" search. The searches for "Bobo Hydrangea vs. Little Lime" increased 181 times over the last 90 days. What I find interesting about this is that it's a search for those specific varieties, and not something like "dwarf panicle hydrangea." That's what marketing will do for demand.

Year of the Backyard

The home services online directory Thumbtack has analyzed its 2024 Curb Appeal Trends Report and has declared this to be the year of the backyard. With the data on home renovations its users are taking on, Thumbtack has found that homeowners are heavily investing in elevating their outdoor spaces.

The [2024 Curb Appeal Trends Report](#) surveyed more than 1,000 homeowners to discuss how they plan to use their yards this summer. They found 29% intend to spend up to \$5,000 on improving their outdoor spaces this summer.



Here's more of what that survey reveals:

62% are planning a landscaping project.

Respondents feel the feature that boosts curb appeal the most is a well-maintained lawn.

The No. 1 consideration for using outdoor spaces is dogs (43%), with 39% saying their dream yard would have a fenced-in space for pets (count me in on that dream!).

27% think their neighbors do a better job of maintaining their yards than they do.

28% are prioritizing sustainable designs for their yards.

40% say they are growing fruits and vegetables.

24% say they are embarrassed about the state of their yard, and 21% say they don't host people because their yard is in bad shape.

The top five cities for the best backyards with a focus on lawn care and landscape design are Atlanta, Dallas, Washington, D.C., Seattle and Orlando.

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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