

Sid on sales, Year Of plants, Bloomin' Easy and a palm-sized squash



TUESDAY, JULY 2, 2024

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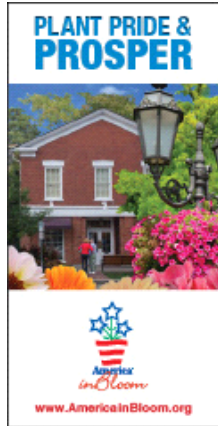


Sid on Sales

For the last few weeks we've been discussing sales and whether or not IGCs have returned to their pre-pandemic strategies of deep discounts to clear out end-of-season inventory. A discussion about IGC discounts and sales isn't complete until [industry consultant Sid Raisch](#) weighs in on the topic. Sid had some very tough love-type thoughts about IGCs and sales, and what follows is probably the first in a few installments about where the erroneous deep-discount mentality comes from.

"I expect nobody to agree with me because we're all cultured into this discounted world we live in. Yet, it isn't necessary to be. It's the simple equivalent of what our moms warned us about—not jumping off a cliff just because our friends do."

"A root problem in our industry is the education system is centered on macroeconomics while IGCs and most growers are microeconomic enterprises where some of those rules are different."



But if you don't know this you're stuck in the macro thinking which ends in economic disaster.

"The overarching problem is to not understand the cost of discounts to a microeconomic enterprise where you cannot make it up on volume. We've also been overexposed to discount retailers like Walmart, Maxx, dollar stores, outlet stores, and some who try to play it both ways like Macy's, and Kohl's.



"The definition of insanity for specialty retailers? It's exactly like this: 'The definition of insanity is discounting over and over and expecting different results.' Macroeconomic math can support discounting to bring in the last marginal penny. But then the damage is done and comes back to haunt. The biggest damage is the short-sighted illusion that it 'works' (although poorly in the end) and is then repeated.

"The softer economy and weather are excuses, not reasons. Higher prices taken recently have not been adequate to even cover inflation of costs of doing business, and don't justify more discounting—that's just not happened. Costs are still rising. There is no net increase of margin to give back.

"The first and biggest cost of a discount is the money that never came in for so much of the stuff that was sold. Those margin dollars given up were the only chance at a net profit. We're tracking away from the most profitable three years in IGC history to perhaps suddenly the worst one to date—possibly even worse than during the Great Recession. Time will tell.

"Nobody ever blames too much discounting for their demise. They blame the economy, the weather, regulations and labor first. There's plenty of blame to go around without taking any of it back."

I alluded to Sid possibly having more to say on the topic. He has a couple of other reasons for why folks might be having a hard time this year. Stay tuned, you might find out what those are in the coming weeks.



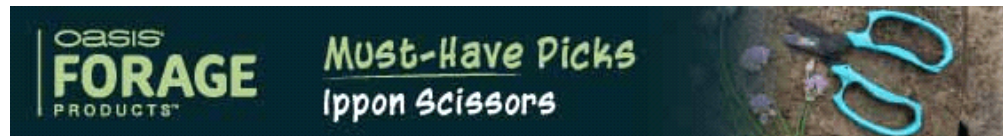
Proof That Trees are Great Gifts

I'm not sure I was expecting anyone to write in with comments about last week's item about promoting trees as gift items. But the one response I received convinced me that trees are indeed a wonderful gift. And you'll see why after reading the following, which came from Cathy Steel, one of my many allied trade friends. Cathy wrote in about her experience as a consumer.

"When my husband and I married in 2001, we had already lived together for several years and had all of the household items we could ever need. We bought our first home in 1998 and had just finished rebuilding it and it needed some 'garden love.' So we worked with our local garden center (Sam Bridge in Greenwich, Connecticut) to make a bridal registry of live plants (trees, shrubs, bulbs, ferns, etc.).

"It was a great way to make our garden grow rapidly and to give us gifts that would last a lifetime! Two of our favorites were a Japanese Maple planted at our front door and a Harry Lauder's Walking Stick planted in our side yard. Every time I see them now I think of the friends and family who gave them, and many other plants, to us for our wedding!"

Cathy went on to say garden center gift registries are a great solution for second marriages and older couples. She also mentioned that trees are a great gift to mark the arrival of a second, third (and possibly more) baby after having received all the "baby basics" with the first child. "In fact," Cathy wrote, "my parents bought us a Dawn Redwood when each of our two sons were born. Eighteen and 20 years later, the trees are much taller than the boys and are great memories of their arrival!"



T.O. Plastics' Enhanced Designs and Sustainability Efforts

This industry uses a lot of plastics. So when a manufacturer announces they are making strides to increase their use of recycled material and improved sustainability efforts, it could have a significant impact.

Thermoforming manufacturer T.O. Plastics just announced that they are making strategic enhancements designed to both expand the company's capacity and improve operational efficiency while also increasing its use of recycled material. They've done this through investing in advanced recycling technology that increases the efficiency of its recycling processes and expands the range of recycled materials that can be used in manufacturing its products. They have also added in an integrated resin recovery system at its Clearwater facility. This system will enable them to utilize more than 99% of the raw waste material they generate during production processes, and will also allow them to begin processing externally sourced scrap material.



These changes to their production and recycling processes will result in T.O. Plastics diverting millions of pounds of waste from landfills annually. That's good news! On top of that, they will be able to produce horticultural containers and trays with at least 95% recycled material.

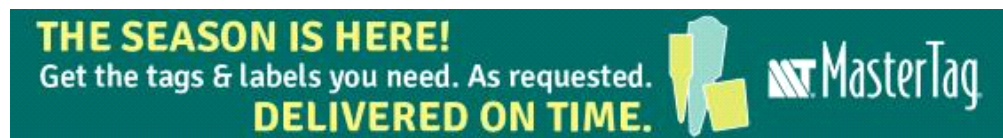
"Sustainability is no longer a choice but a necessity, and our dedication to environmental responsibility has never been stronger," said Jared Rusch, Vice President of Sales & Marketing in a press release on the topic. "Our latest recycling efforts mark a significant milestone as we continuously seek out and implement more effective and innovative practices to reduce our

environmental footprint.”

T.O. Plastics has also invested in upgrading its production facility and expanding equipment capability. The addition of a new high-volume extruder line not only increased production capacity, but incorporating state-of-the-art technology has also sustained current manufacturing while increasing the company’s use of recycled materials.

“Through these upgrades, T.O. Plastics is increasing our commitment to sustainability within the horticultural industry. Our investment in new recycling technologies and processing capability enhancements reflects our commitment to environmental responsibility and the success of our customers,” said Paul Meschke, President of T.O. Plastics. “We believe that by incorporating these new capabilities we can make a significant impact, while still delivering the high-quality products and services our customers expect from us.”

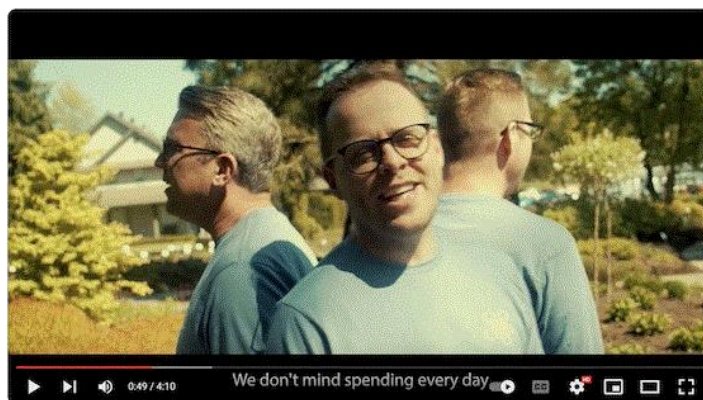
If you’re interested in what else they have going on over at T.O. Plastics in the way of sustainability initiatives and capabilities, please visit their [WEBSITE](#).



Bloomin’ Good

The folks at Bloomin’ Easy Plants (aka Van Belle Nursery) are this industry’s equivalent to Taylor Swift. Every video they debut—whether it’s to celebrate a holiday or lure us to their booth during a trade show—is an instant industry classic. Such is the case with their latest video—set to the tune of Maroon’s 5’s song, “She Will Be Loved.”

But it’s not all about entertainment. This video showcases its 12 new exclusive shrubs and perennials aimed at young homeowners for 2025 wholesale release. They are so creative in how they connect a shrub, such as Delphinium Laser Beam, into a music video. But they did—and with the other 11 intros, too. Also, I’m not sure if these hort guys are actually singing, but if they are, I bet they are stars at the local karaoke night.



Watch the “BE (i.e. Bloomin’ Easy Loved)” video [HERE](#). And get an up-close and personal look at these new plants in the Bloomin’ Easy Plants booth (2835) and in the New Varieties Showcase during Cultivate’24 in Columbus, Ohio, July 13-16. For more on these plants and others in their collection that now numbers 91 improved varieties, visit their [WEBSITE](#).



PPA's Symposium Registration Deadline

If Cultivate'24 is coming up, then Perennial Plant Association's National Symposium is just around the corner, too (July 29-August 1). Consider this your final reminder to register before the July 15 deadline. Here are some enticements to get you over to the [REGISTRATION PAGE](#):



- The Symposium takes place in the lovely locale of Asheville, North Carolina.
- PPA will be celebrating its 40th anniversary! They'll be celebrating with special events all week.
- Add-on bus tours take place on that Monday, while an "add-on" day of industry-leading speakers hosted by Speaking of Gardening will take place on Friday.
- Explore Southern Appalachian Flora with Tom Ranney.
- The session "From Test Tube to Garden Center: The Role of Plant Tissue in Bringing New Perennials to Market" with Kelly Elsworth is right up your alley!

Check out the full schedule [HERE](#).

Speaking of Perennials ...

And a lot of other categories of plants, the National Garden Bureau just announced the species that will be featured in their 2025 Year Of program. Drumroll please ...



The 2025 "Year of the" are:

- Perennial: Asclepias
- Bulb: Caladium

- Annual: Calendula
- Flowering Shrub: Dogwood
- Houseplant: Monstera
- Edible: Pea

Except for the pea, I'm loving all of them (I have a severe pea aversion, but respect that you might love them).

If you'll be at Cultivate this year, do check out NGB's 2025 Year Of display in the Convention Center's concourse (I remember last year's display and it was super; expect the same this year).

Consumer promotion for the 2025 Year Of plants will begin in November. But NGB is making it way easier for growers and retailers to make plans for this proven successful national marketing campaign by releasing its super-lovely, creative and on-point marketing tools to you all now.

To access any of the free marketing materials, just head over to [HERE](#) to receive a link to download any of those tools, which includes custom, hand-painted logos, pre-written social media posts, tons of photos of these crops, posters, signs and more. Select 2025 tools are already available now; others will be uploaded through late summer and early fall. And, all of the 2024 Year Of tools are there, too—there's still six months left to promote them.

What's Looking Good

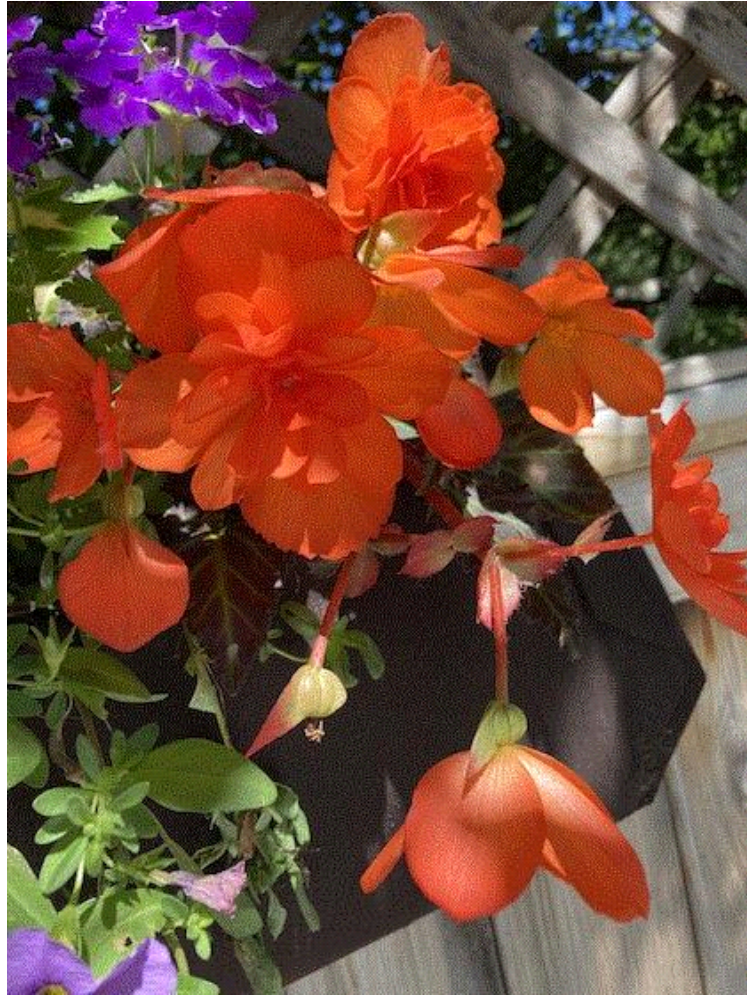
Squash was the featured edible of NGB's 2024 Year Of program, and a squash is in my "What's Looking Good" assortment for this week.



This is Golden Griller F1 Summer Squash, which came in my sample box from the folks at Burpee. And the squash doesn't get much bigger than this! I'm stretching the truth just a bit, but they say it is harvestable when it is the size of your palm, which is a good size for grilling. It has a spread of less than 3 ft. and produces 3-4 oz. fruit in just 40-45 days. I have it and a companion (Rocio F1 Summer Squash) growing in a container on my porch to keep an eye out for the resident groundhogs and bunnies. Sure, it'll outgrow the container and impede my stairs, but I'll worry about that when we get there.

On the flower front, I'm loving Begonia l'CONIA Portofino Dark Orange from Dümme Orange. Such a great color and lush blooms, and it really pops against the dark foliage. And it's stood up

really well to some recent heavy rains and winds (for yet another weekend in a row).



I am also loving the Grand Idols Glory Days Red Orange Bicolor geranium from Dümmer Orange. It's been growing like gangbusters over the last three weeks and put out a bunch of blooms just recently—with lots more to come. It has a trailing habit and is just starting to tip over this lovely blue pot. And with a white Adirondack chair in the background, this is looking very patriotic, isn't it?



Happy 4th, everyone!

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



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
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