A question, plus Katie talks nostalgia



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2024

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Green Profit's buZZ!

Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

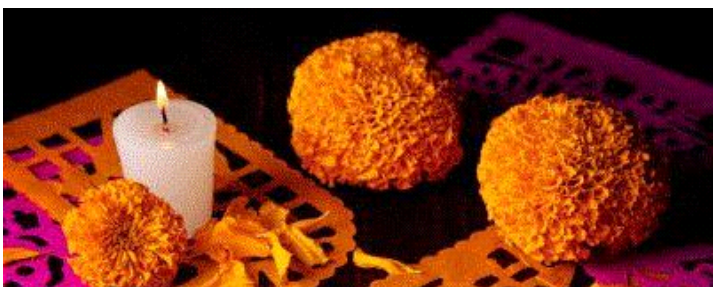
COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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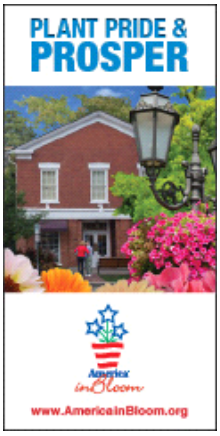


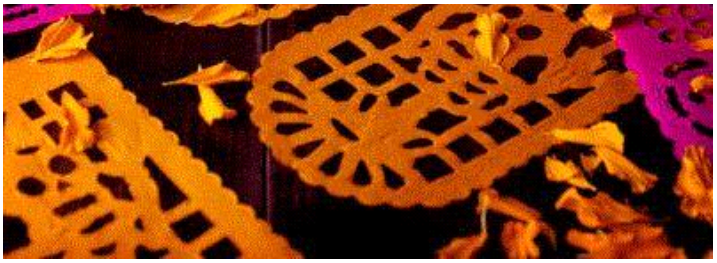
A Question, Your Answer?

Before we start off today's special edition of *buZZ!,* we have a question for you from friend and colleague Jen Polanz. She'd like to know if you and your garden center are recognizing Dia de los Muertos at your store and if so, what are you doing?







It's such a neat holiday to build around, and one well-suited to IGCs, don't you think? JP would like to see what you all may be doing for the holiday (which is November 1-2) and will include a piece on this in the January issue of *Green Profit* so folks can start planning for next fall.

If you're doing something for the Day of the Dead, send Jen your plans HERE.

And for those of you who might want to throw something together quickly for the 21+ crowd, here are a few floral-inclusive COCKTAIL RECIPES appropriate for the holiday. And they are easily made into mocktails, too.





It's Becoming a Tradition

For the past two Octobers I have handed over the reins of one edition of *buZZ!* to Katie Elzer-Peters, frequent *Green Profit* contributor and owner of the horticultural digital marketing company Garden of Words. Usually, Katie has just been somewhere and has plenty to say about what she has just learned. This week's no different.

And, if you get Katie's monthly newsletter, this will read in a familiar way. If not, welcome to *buZZ!,* Katie-style. She gives us lots of stories and some business wisdom, too. If you enjoy it, you can subscribe to her newsletter HERE.

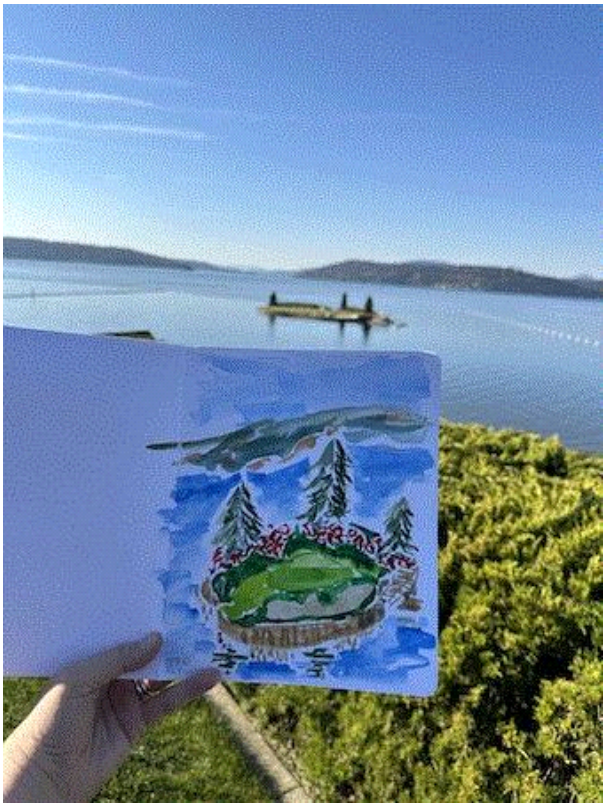
So, with that, on with the show! The rest of today's *buZZ!* is all from Katie. And thanks, Katie!

Future Nostalgia

Was it the swooooooshwaCK of a 7-iron hitting a ball? Maybe it was the tsk-tsk-tsk-tsk of sprinklers or the THUDjingle of a bag of golf clubs hitting the caddie's shoulder. Maybe it was the dew sparkling over rolling fairways or the smell of freshly mown grass.

Or maybe it was all of that.

My team member Joan Dudney and I were at the Coeur d'Alene Resort golf course so I could eat breakfast and sketch overlooking the famous floating green. I'm 45 but I felt like I was 7, back at Highland Golf & Country Club with my Dad, marveling at the mini corn cobs on the salad bar and squealing like a banshee (very un-country club like) from the golf cart as my dad stomped the pedal, releasing the break (kaCHUNK) and whizzed us off to the find treasures under the sweetgum trees. Those course trees are gone, but I have my own sweetgum now. My friend Jerry would love to cut that tree down. "It's going to fall on your house," he says. "It's why I bought the house," I respond.



There were mini corn cobs on the salad bar at the Coeur d'Alene Resort, too. Despite never having visited before, I felt comfortable.

Maybe it was all of that.

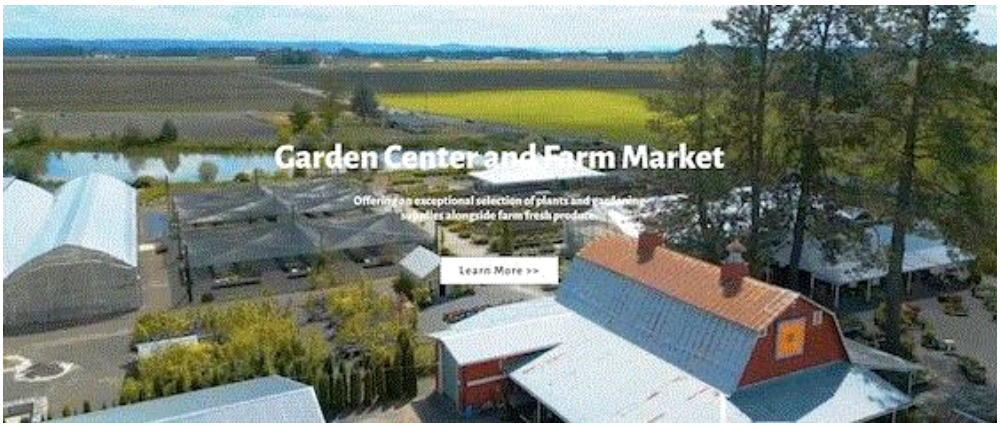


Droning On

I was in Idaho for the Northwest Nursery Buyers Association (NNBA) fall meeting. Tuesday, Joan and I spent the day working one-on-one with the members, doing website and email evaluations,

spending about 30 minutes apiece deep diving into garden center websites, Instagram profiles and marketing emails. We looked at a LOT of websites. We heard a LOT of stories. I started noticing patterns.

For one: Garden centers in the Northwest have lots of drone footage and they use it well. Most have a drone video as their top website image, and popping that video up top lets people preview the garden center before they visit it so they feel comfortable and oriented when they arrive.



Blooming Junction in Cornelius, Oregon, has some spectacular drone footage at the top of their website. Click the photo to watch.

I'm not saying every IGC should do this, but I am saying that having plenty of pictures and/or videos of your location and the friendly people working and visiting your location—not just closeups of plants—on your website is a good idea. **Scan through your site and take note of where you can add more pictures of your place and your people.** Those matter as much as your plants. People probably matter *more* than your plants.

Flamingling

The most famous cookie (cake? cookiecake?) in the world is Proust's madeleine. Near the opening of the book "Remembrance of Things Past," Marcel the protagonist dips a madeleine (a cake-like cookie) into a cup of tea. As soon as he tastes the soggy crumbs in the tea, he is hurled back in time, memory after memory washing over him.

Sensory memory, in the way of sound, taste, touch or scent, is potent. While the immediacy of the information you process when you smell or touch something is fleetingly retained, the association your brain makes with that sensory experience is deep and lasting.

And what are garden centers if not a cacophony of textures, sounds and scents?

IGCs are simply made for creating sensory experiences for customers and **enjoying the benefits** that come with being associated with those memories.

While sight is one of the five senses, it's not usually considered as impactful for memory making as a taste, smell or sound.

I challenge that assumption. Whenever I see a mirrored gazing ball on a pedestal, I'm immediately back at Grandma Elzer's house, kicking my feet on the swing and drinking Canada Dry ginger ale. A glimpse of fuchsia four-o-clocks growing along the road sends me walking alongside the house next to Grandpa Elzer, shaking seeds loose into a paper bag for planting next spring.

My Garden Nursery in Bellingham, Washington, has swapped gazing balls for purple flamingos. Ten percent of each flamingo sale goes to the Alzheimer's Association to raise money for a cure for Alzheimer's, a cause near and dear to the owners' hearts. Their food truck is branded with a giant purple flamingo and their logo is a bright and cheery purple flower (Jenny) and green tree (Bill). From now on, when I see a flamingo of any color, I'll think of them. And so will the rest of

Bellingham.





These ARE Your Grandma's Mums

Mums are a controversial subject, I know. Your customers want them, because they've been trained to, but mums are so hard to keep alive for more than a week and can be a real whomp whomp to new gardeners who think they have a black thumb because their mum died.

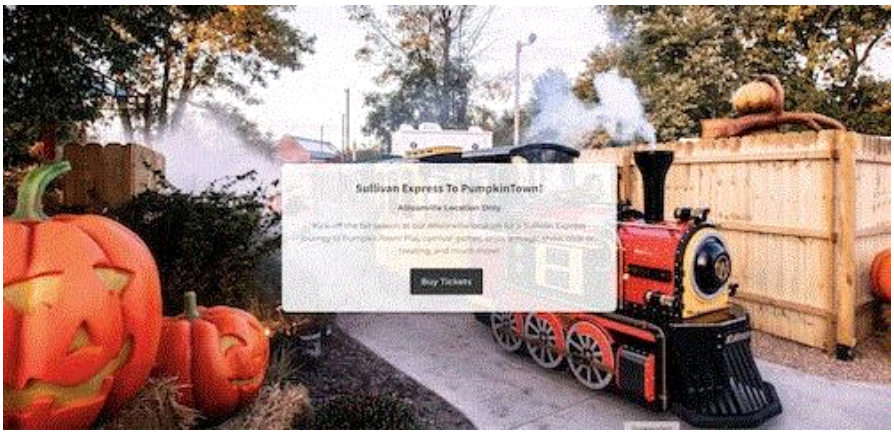
My team and I run the email marketing program for Bluestone Perennials, and perennial mums are one of their flagship products. I ordered 30 this spring. They are thriving and blooming and I look forward to seeing them next year! Often, we'll send an email with "these aren't your grandma's mums" in the copy, but I've been wondering, maybe should we say, "These ARE your grandma's mums"? Should we capitalize on the nostalgia factor?



There is a REASON why pumpkin spice is so popular. I don't think it's because people love the taste so much. I think it's **because they love the feeling of fall.**

The Pumpkin Fairy Polar Express

My niece has grown up visiting Santa at Sullivan Hardware & Garden. A decade ago, owner Pat Sullivan bought a mini train, created a holiday-themed track, and invited Santa down for a visit. In a 2019 interview with the *Indianapolis Business Journal*, he said he was inspired by his childhood experience riding the Santa Express at the former L.S. Ayres department store in downtown Indy. (I, too, have a potent memory from Christmas at Ayres, but you're gonna have to email me for it.)



That one train has grown to many, and it is now the ride to Pumpkintown at one of their other locations. My niece was sad to age out of tickets to visit Santa (the train ride is really extra fun)

but there’s no age limit for fairy garden workshop attendees. Sullivan’s sold a few more tickets to one of those workshops this summer because while Grandma Joy would take her anywhere to do anything, my niece picked that because of the train. Sensory memory is powerful.

The Hours Have Lost Their Clock

I’m reading an exceptionally nerdy book of that title by Grafton Tanner. It details all kinds of ways feelings of nostalgia affect our choices, day to day. It’s possible to weaponize nostalgia, and unscrupulous marketers do that. It’s also possible to harness nostalgia in a way that benefits and comforts, and IGCs naturally *excel* at that.

During the trade show Joan and I huddled in the darkness waiting to catch a glimpse of Firefly Petunias glowing. As our eyes adjusted and the flowers emerged, I caught a whiff of that particular petunia fragrance. For just a second I was 6 again, planting the flower bed alongside the house with my mom: pink petunias, white vinca and purple ageratum. Every year. Always those three.

The new petunias might glow, but they’re still petunias. When you sell them, use that. They’re not grandma’s same petunias, but they’re still petunias like your grandma planted.

Exactly what I’m looking for.

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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