

IGC Performance in 2024; Gardeners on '25; Mocha Mousse Not So Tasty?



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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2024

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

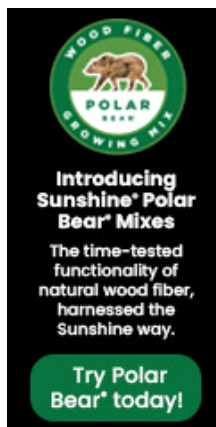
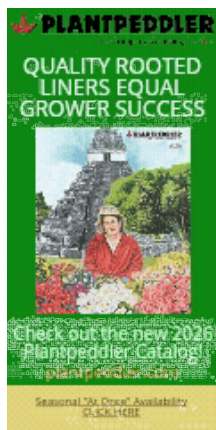
IGCs in '24: Meh ...
... but '25 should be better!
What gardeners say about it
The younger gens are bullish!
Register for those January shows!
Not all like Mocha Mousse ...
... but GMG does!
Finally ...

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FOR
2026**



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How did IGCs do in 2024? Meh ...



By all right, Ellen Wells should publish this first in her excellent *buzz!* newsletter since she focuses on retail. And, of course, I'll share it with her to share with her readers (many of whom are reading it here, so that would be redundant ...)

Anyway, I got it first, and finders keepers and possession is nine-tenths of the law and all that.

This is from my friend and yours, Danny Summers, managing director and "chief instigator" at [The Garden Center Group](#) (GCG), "North America's Resource for Garden Retailing since 2001."

All year long, GCG gathers reams of useful sales data from its many member garden centers, which Danny and his team analyze and shares back with the membership so they know how they're performing compared to their peers. It's all members-only stuff (which is why you should join—more on that at the end). But on a whim, I asked Danny if he'd be willing and able to summarize 2024 as experienced by GCG members and share it with the industry. You know, a rising tide floats all boats ...? And he graciously agreed! Here's what he sent me:



2024—Down

As we near the last few weeks of 2024, this year's results are all but final. The Garden Center Group's Weekly Department Review (WDR) will have had over 4,000 weekly uploads to produce a detailed tracking of performance across 28 Product Categories with Sales, Average Sale and Transaction Counts. All of this by Region and by Sales Group (Centers grouped by annual volume).

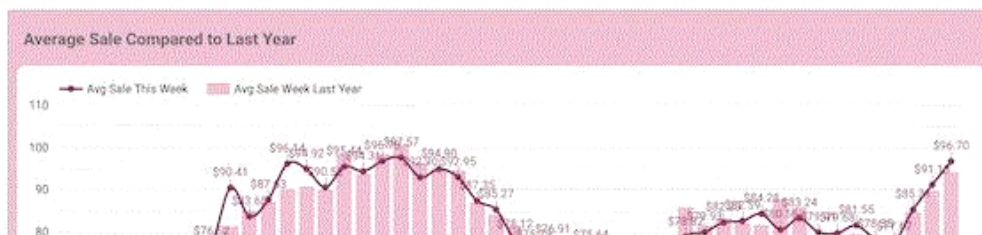
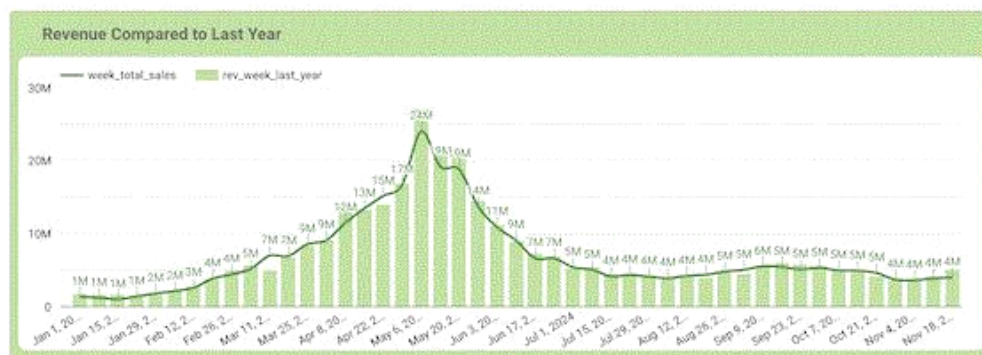
Here's what we call The Big Three ... (as of Week 47, week ending November 24, 2024)

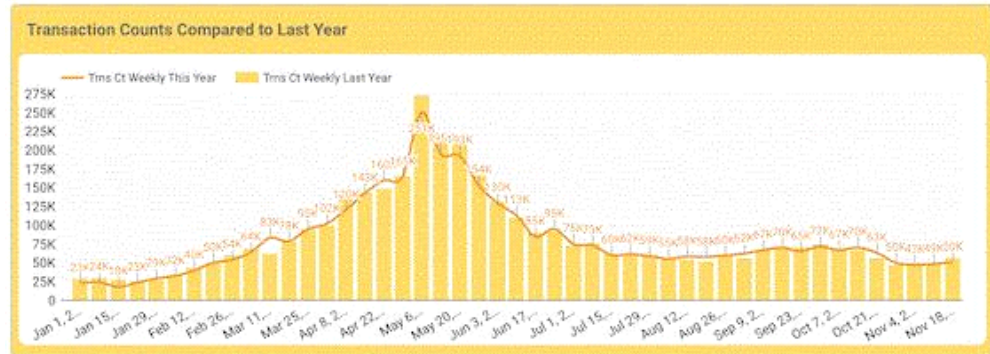
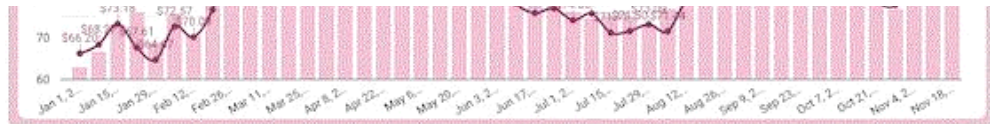
2024 YTD Sales: -5.0%

2024 YTD Average Sale: -0.1%

2024 Transaction Counts: -4.8%

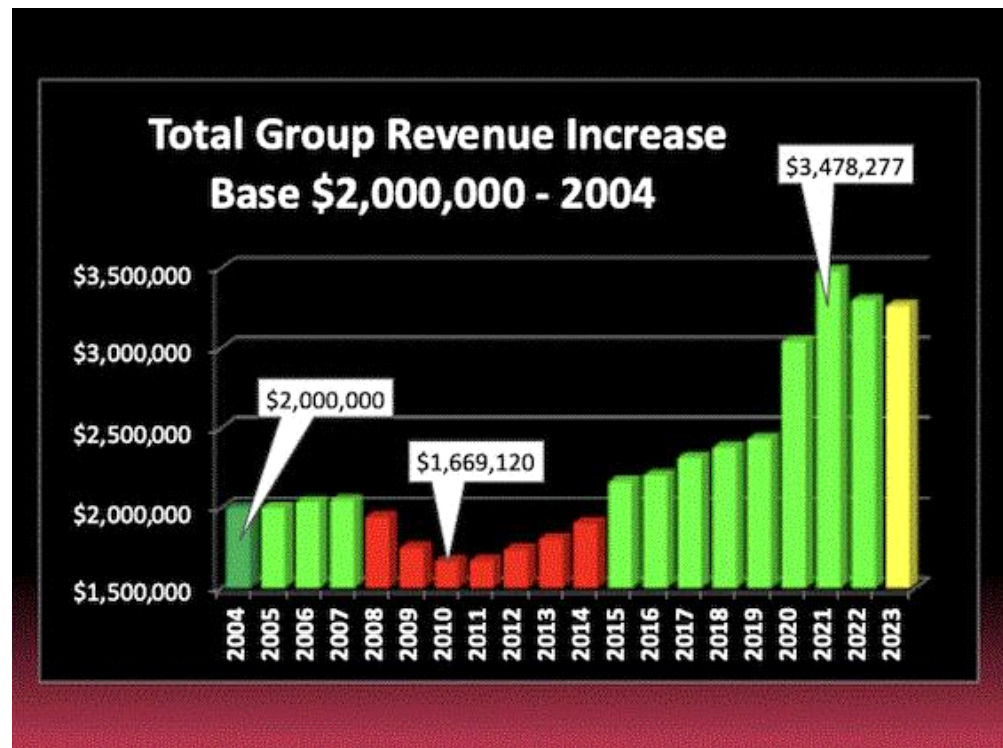
Actually, this pattern of The Big Three has been consistent since the end of May. Here's The Big Three in chart form:





Recognizing that Sales is the result of Transaction Counts and Average Sale, these charts help tell the story of 2024. In these charts, the line represents 2024, while the bars represent each week in 2023.

Take a look at both the Sales and Transaction Counts charts. See how similar they appear. You can see where the line is above the bar (2024 gains) and where it is below the bar. Overall, there were some very important weeks leading up to Mother's Day where we see Transaction Count reductions. Those key weeks produced most of the deficits we'll end the year with.



One more chart from Danny: The growth of a typical garden center that had \$2 million in sales in 2004, based on GCG member sales trends over the years.



The 2025 crystal ball—“Better”!

Certainly, everyone’s crystal ball for what to expect in 2025 is “foggy,” but keeping an ear-to-the-ground for what garden centers are saying, what growers and hardgoods suppliers are saying—even what Charlie Hall and others industry analysts are saying—can give us a sense of what may happen next year.

Overall, I see most being optimistic for a better 2025. We know to be a gardener, optimism is in our DNA, but here’s a few things that can help give us more confidence of 2025 being an “UP” year:

- We do have a more enthusiastic young audience
- This will not be an election year
- We see interest rates coming down
- Many “new” homes built over the past couple years are not yet landscaped
- Many “new” gardens are not near completed (we would say a garden is never finished, but these new homeowners are just beginning in many cases)

None of these positive observations pushes garden centers to build inventories like we did several years ago. Instead, solid conservative growth, especially for the initial spring preparations, seems warranted. At the same time, we’re on this new plateau that was created since 2020.

Being fully prepared and ready for a great spring, by proper planning and having the ability to react to positive growth, will help create a great year.

Thanks, Danny! Like what you learned here? Perhaps you should become a Garden Center Group member! Danny points out that you can find a “get in touch” form on their [WEBSITE](#).



What do gardeners say about 2024 & 2025?

What fortuitous timing Mike Reiber and his marketing firm [Axiom](#) has—Mike just sent me their annual Gardening Outlook Study! And the first headline is positive:

“Home Gardeners Plan to Spend More Time and Money Gardening in 2025”

However, the subhead brings us down with a thud:

“Two Key Indices Drop 8-10 Percentage Points from Last Year”

Says their press release:

Interest in home gardening continues to rise despite concerns about the economy and inflation, however, respondents saying they spent more time gardening in 2024 dropped 10.9 percentage points from last year. In addition, respondents planning to plant more and expand their gardens in 2025 dropped 8.8 percentage points from last year.

“This is the first year since we launched the Axiom Gardening Outlook Study that we’ve observed decreases in time spent gardening and plans to plant more and expand their gardens,” said Mike Reiber, founder and CEO of Axiom. “These decreases indicate a potential leveling that merits further investigation. Despite these decreases, however, four in 10 respondents say they plan to spend more money on gardening in 2025 and plan to spend more time gardening in 2025.”

So let me see if I’ve got this, Mike ... We’re seeing a leveling off of the growth of gardening—

measured in time spent and plans to do more next year—that we saw through the pandemic. That makes sense because we knew the pandemic boom wouldn't last. In fact, Danny's data above bears that out.



The younger generations are bullish on gardening

More good news from Mike comes from our younger customers—the ones we're counting on carrying us through the next 20 years and beyond:

- Gen Z (65.4%) and Gen Y (47%) were the top two segments reporting the greatest increases in additional time spent gardening in 2024.
- Gen Z (46.2%) and Gen Y (43.9%) were the top two segments that expect to spend more money on gardening in 2025.
- Gen Z (69.2%) and Gen Y (51%) were the top two segments that expect to spend more time gardening in 2025.

As a reminder, Gen Z is aged 12 to 27, and Gen Y (aka the Millennials) is aged 28 to 42 (give or take).

More takeaways from Mike:

- Home Depot dominated garden supply and plant purchases, however, he believes IGCs remain relevant to home gardeners
- Home Depot was the top purchase source for garden supplies (32.2%) and garden plants (33.9%); IGCs were 20 percentage points lower than Home Depot for garden supplies and 19 percentage points lower for garden plants
- When asked where they find the highest quality garden plants, 30.3% of respondents named IGCs with 24.7% citing Home Depot
- Top 3 reasons for visiting IGCs included: more plant choices (29.9%), new plant varieties (17.4%) and help choosing the right plant (13.8%.)
- When asked which retailer had the most knowledgeable store associates, 25.7% of respondents named IGCs with 23.7% citing Home Depot
- 62.8% of respondents had the same number of visits to IGCs compared to last year.

Lastly, where do home gardeners say they get their information and inspiration:

- 28% of respondents named websites as the most important place to learn about new plants and gardening supplies compared to 16.8% for IGCs and 11.8% for Home Depot
- 38.5% of respondents named YouTube as the most important social medium compared to 18.4% for Facebook and 12.8% for Instagram

For more information on the Axiom 2025 Gardening Outlook Study, download the report [HERE](#).

Thanks for sharing, Mike!



Register for those January shows!

What's the first thing you should do in 2025? Attend trade shows to seek out new products, new varieties and new contacts to help you in business. (And reconnect with old friends, too, of course.)

Ball Publishing's [Hortcalendar.com](https://www.hortcalendar.com) is the place to look for every professional horticulture event on the planet. And January is the busiest month of the calendar, with 23 events around the U.S. and the world. If you attended the first seven shows of the year, you would visit Utah, Ontario, Montana, Baltimore, Dallas, Savannah and Hamburg, Germany.

What I've learned after 30-plus years of doing this is that those January shows sneak up on you and you forget to register or you can't get a decent hotel. So if you're planning any January travel, do some registering and booking right now before it's too late!

Ball Publishing and our freelancers will be at three of the shows that I'm aware of: [MANTS](#) in Baltimore (Jen Zurko will be there), [TPIE](#) in Ft. Lauderdale (Ellen and I will be there—rough duty, we know) and [IPM Essen](#) (my first international trip of the year). So expect plenty of editorial highlights, photos and even some video of what's new for 2025.

Now to practice what I preach—I need to check that I've booked a hotel and car for Essen!



“Mmmmmmm. I’ll have the Mocha Mousse, please!”



Or perhaps not. Never have I seen a [Pantone Color of the Year](#) generate such universal disgust among designers and plant people. We can work with a lot of colors, but this one seems ... well,

here are some comments from Facebook attached to Pantone's update of their profile picture to the color:

"1980s pantyhose. Cool."
"If disappointment was a color."
"All the millions of beautiful colors in the world and Pantone picks this."
"Oh yeah, spray tan."
"It's only been an hour, Pantone. You can delete this and try again."
"Reminds me of wet patè liver-flavored cat food."
"If ugh was a color."
"The '80s called ... they want their couch back."
"Band-Aid."
"Silly Putty."
"If Vienna sausages were a paint color."

And quite a few poop emojis.

To be fair, there are some fans:

"This neutral girl loves it!!!"
"It's actually a gorgeous color."
"But for real, I am in love with this color and how it conveys warmth, classic style and calm. I love the earthy tone and how it pairs well with so many colors."
"Very earthy chic."
"Love this color! Mix it with a green-tone turquoise, pearl, Roman glass hues, various jaspers. You can do a lot with mocha brown."
"I love it. They don't all have to be some bright obnoxious garish color."
"This is right up my street. It's cozy nights in with a hot chocolate and marshmallows and all things #hygge."

It's only fair that I give Pantone's description of Mocha Mousse (which IS a great dessert, I must say):

"Underpinned by our desire for everyday pleasures, PANTONE 17-1230 Mocha Mousse expresses a level of thoughtful indulgence. Sophisticated and lush, yet at the same time an unpretentious classic, PANTONE 17-1230 Mocha Mousse extends our perceptions of the browns from being humble and grounded to embrace aspirational and luxe."—*Leatrice Eiseman, Executive Director, Pantone Color Institute*

What do you think? Love it or hate it? I mean, as it relates to horticulture and using it to sell our products? Email me [HERE](#).

I was a graphic design major for a couple terms at UF before figuring out that I was a better writer than artist, so I feel qualified to agree with the folks who like it: It's a good foil for our vegetation and flowers. They could have named it "Mulch" and we'd get it. Pantone colors don't have to match one of our vivid flowers or shades of pothos green. Paint some benches or background walls with it and watch your plants pop!



Garden Media Group likes it

Katie Dubow, chief cook and bottle wash at PR firm Garden Media Group, is a fan of Mocha Mousse. She said this in an email to me:

"Pantone's 2025 Color of the Year, Mocha Mousse, has arrived! This rich, mellow brown marks a

shift from last year's Peach Fuzz to a tone that resonates deeply with our industry. And, of course, you know we rounded up some of the best plants and products to help IGCs, designers, growers and landscapers integrate this trending hue into their 2025 offerings."

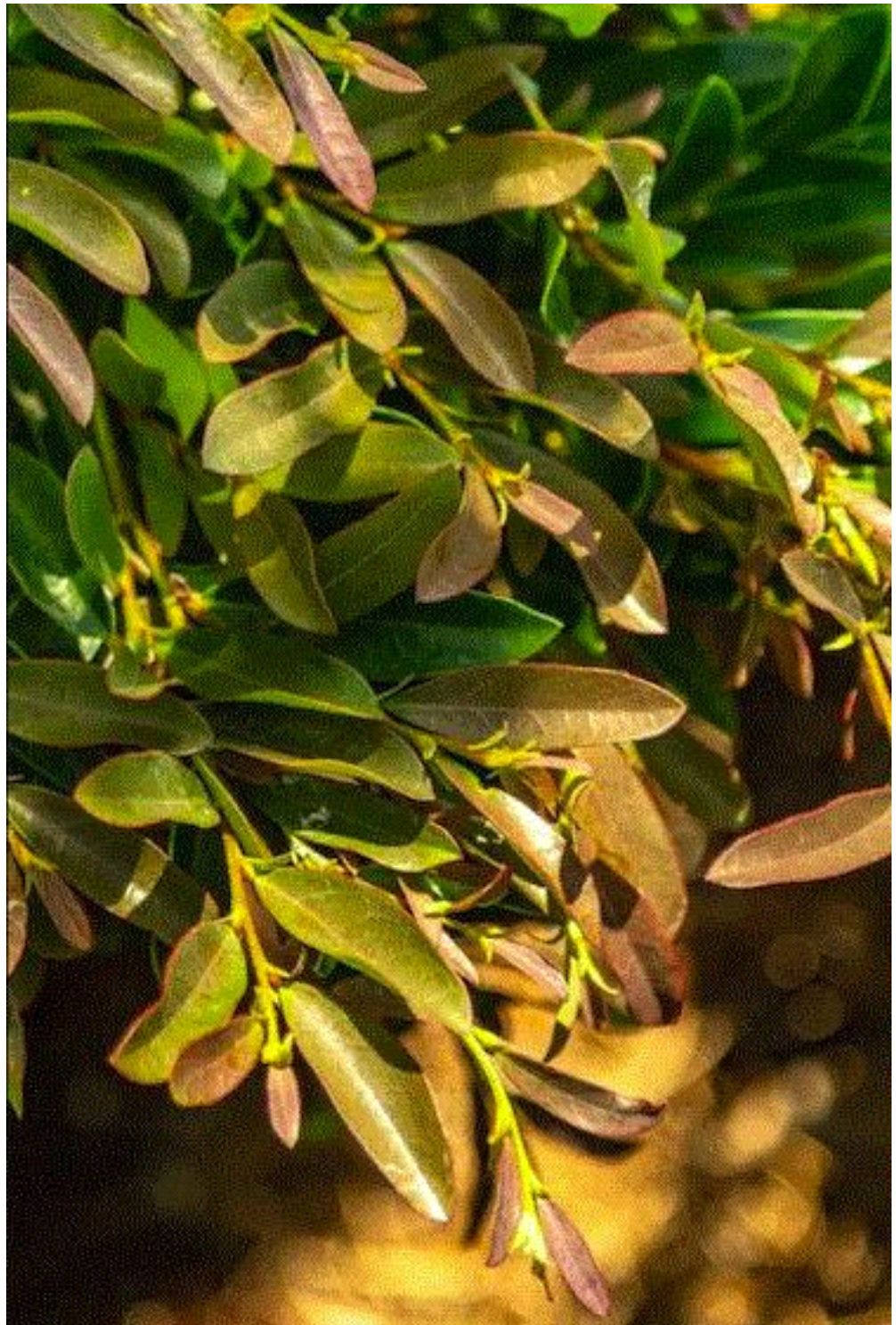
Then, being a smart and savvy PR maven, Katie attached plants and products offered by some of her clients that tie in with the color (click the image to go to the source):

Oasis Forage Geo Pot



Eco-friendly and lightweight, these mocha-hued containers bring sophistication to arrangements. Their ceramic-like appearance, constructed from renewable materials, aligns beautifully with sustainable trends.

Cast in Bronze Distylium



Brown-tinted new growth matures into glossy dark green foliage. This evergreen adds depth and structure to any landscape. It thrives in full sun to part shade and is perfect in Zones 7 to 9.

Bronze Beauty Cleyera



Chocolate-hued new growth gives way to emerald green foliage, making this evergreen a standout for hedges or privacy screens. It's heat-tolerant, low-maintenance and perfect for Zones 7 to 10.

Oakleaf Hydrangea



Recommended by Mary Phillips of the National Wildlife Federation, this native plant's blooms change from a pristine white to rustic brown, creating year-round interest and beautiful dried flower arrangements. It prefers partial sun to full shade, slightly acidic soil and thrives in Zones 5 to 9.

Jackson & Perkins Southern Magnolia Gift Tree



Featuring glossy green leaves with velvety brown undersides, this gift-ready tree is both a stunning indoor plant and a timeless landscape addition. Zones 6 to 9.

Chocolate Anthurium



With its rich chocolate-purple flowers, this tropical plant offers year-round blooms and makes a striking indoor accent for the Mocha Mousse trend.

An advertisement featuring a collage of colorful flowers (purple, pink, and red) on the left. Overlaid on the flowers is a circular gold seal with a sunburst design and a water drop icon, containing the text "DROUGHTABLES™" and "LOW-WATER PLANTS". To the right, on a dark background, is the text "INTRODUCING DROUGHTABLES™ BY" above a circular logo with a stylized 'B' and floral motifs, followed by "BLOOM·ables". At the bottom right, a gold button contains the text "See what's included!".

INTRODUCING
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BLOOM·ables

See what's included!

Finally ...



Don't forget the reindeer!

Kids love to leave cookies and milk for Santa ... but what about Rudolph and Dancer and Vixen and Bambi and the rest of them? They deserve a treat for doing all that flying Christmas Eve.

That's where Bolthouse Farm's "Are You Reindeer Ready" campaign comes in, cleverly

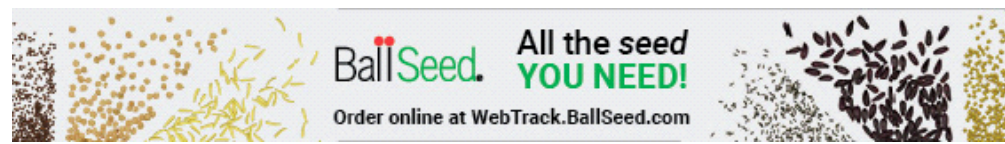
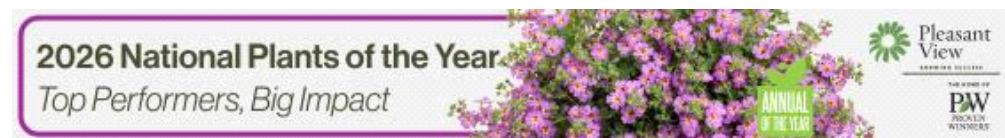
promoting their snacking carrots as part of the holidays. Highlights include:

- Holiday-inspired, carrot-based recipes (I think those are carrot cookies Santa is about to enjoy, above)
- DIY "Reindeer Snack Packs": Create treats for Santa's crew with festive bags and printable tags
- Holiday Coloring Contest: Share kids' artwork for a chance to win Bolthouse-branded goodies
- Hidden-Carrot Hunt: Find and count carrots across posts to win holiday prizes
- Christmas Eve Downloadable Tag: Add a magical note for reindeer alongside Bolthouse Fresh carrots

Clever!

"There's something magical about the holiday season and we're thrilled to bring a bit of that spirit into homes everywhere," said Karen White, vice president of marketing at Bolthouse Fresh Foods. "Our goal with 'Are You Reindeer Ready?' is to create memorable, fun experiences for kids of every age."

The campaign runs throughout December.



Rudbeckia 'Treasure Trove'
New to Proven Winners
Perennials for 2025-2026!



Feel free to email me at beytes@growertalks.com if you have ideas, comments or questions.

See you next time!

Chi

Chris Beytes

Editor-in-Chief

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