

Farwest Tours, NewGen Boxwood Joins PW, Interns & More



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Three Dynamic Tours Offered at Farwest 2025

As an extension professional who gets to visit growers across the country on a regular basis, there's really no substitute for a well-organized industry tour. One of the greatest parts of the Farwest trade show is the pre-conference tours. In years past there were two different tours, but this year they've added a third option.

The Automation Tour is all about equipment and application. Participants will see cutting-edge nursery automation equipment being built at a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility, GK Machine Inc., and tour a prototype for a fully-automated smart greenhouse. Following stops will include three innovative nurseries who are redefining the future of the industry through automation—Bountiful Farms Nursery Inc., Woodburn Nursery & Azaleas Inc. and Brentano's Tree Farm LLC.



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As always you can join the Wholesale Grower Tour or the Retail Garden Center Tour to get a glimpse into the Oregon green industry. These include stops at some of the most iconic operations in the country. And these tours were developed to perfectly highlight all the unique and innovative operations that make up Oregon's nursery industry.

I attended Farwest last year and didn't get registered in time to make the tour—I'll be sure to get in early this year! There should be more room with the new tour added, but you don't want to wait too long to register. I have a feeling this new tour will sell out quickly.

Farwest takes place in Portland, Oregon, from Wednesday, August 20 through Friday, August 22. You can register and get more information [HERE](#).



Wildflower Sod!

A wildflower meadow has always been a way to incorporate a new look for landscapes when you want to bring unique, eye-catching appeal. Plus, wildflower meadows bring a whole litany of ecological benefits, from supporting pollinator populations to improving landscape plant diversity.

However, planting and establishing a wildflower meadow takes a good bit of time and commitment to do right, lowering the likelihood of follow-through actions. Luckily, Meadow Lab has made that process much easier with the release of Wildflower Sod!



Wildflower sod from Meadow Lab comes with regionally appropriate wildflowers rooted into a natural mat for easy deployment.

I wasn't familiar with Meadow Lab until recently. Based in New York's Hudson Valley, the company is focused on revolutionizing landscape design, putting nature back where it belongs—into the landscape. Their mission is to make the world wilder, more beautiful and ecologically resilient without adding complexity. What more could you want?

Their new wildflower sod fits that bill perfectly. This ready-to-install solution brings all the biodiversity we want in our landscapes without the effort. The result of more than 20 years of research and development, this turf alternative will surely turn heads and get people talking.

Founder Claire Chambers said, "We saw a clear need for landscapes that go beyond esthetics—spaces that are functional, resilient and ecologically sound."

It's a wonderful solution for the growing number of people embracing ecological landscape solutions. [Check out their website for more information.](#)



NewGen Boxwood Joins Proven Winners ColorChoice

Some big news in the world of boxwood was announced recently: Spring Meadow Nursery, in partnership with Saunders Brothers, has added the NewGen series of boxwood to its Proven Winners ColorChoice shrubs line.

This collaboration strengthens Proven Winners' collection in top-performing evergreen shrubs with these new, in-demand boxwood cultivars. NewGen boxwood has been gaining popularity by bringing resistance to boxwood blight and boxwood leafminer with top-notch appearance.

NewGen Boxwood were introduced in the spring of 2018 after years of testing for disease and pest resistance in the Mid-Atlantic. With a strong record of performance in landscapes across

the region, NewGen Boxwood was a natural fit for the Proven Winners ColorChoice collection.



“NewGen Boxwood aligns perfectly with the Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs commitment to offering superior woody plant varieties that outperform conventional selections,” said Jeremy Deppe, Spring Meadow’s general manager. “The fact that NewGen Boxwood comes from a family owned nursery with the legacy and history of Saunders Brothers makes this partnership even more exciting.”

Jeremy goes on to emphasize how meaningful it is to welcome Saunders Brothers into the Proven Winners family, highlighting the shared values that make this a strong partnership.

The first three varieties that will be added to the ColorChoice line include Independence, Freedom and Liberty Belle. These three varieties provide a good range of aesthetics, resistance and appeal.

You can find out more about the individual varieties and the partnership [HERE](#).



Want to Host an Intern?

If you're a regular reader of this newsletter, you've probably noticed that I like to promote scholarship and internship opportunities for students whenever possible. As an academic who regularly works with students, I see firsthand how important these opportunities are for developing the next generation of our innovators and workforce. I know that some people are not only interested in how they can support these efforts financially, but I sometimes get asked how operations can break into the internship world. It can be a daunting task to organize an internship at your operation, but if you've ever found yourself asking, “How do I host an intern at my operation?” American Floral Endowment (AFE) might have an answer.

AFE has made it easier than ever to host interns by applying to be a host employer through them. This takes much of the burden off of you and lets AFE do the heavy lifting. They'll screen

intern applicants carefully to ensure they're mature and knowledgeable enough to thrive in the position. Only those that meet the strict scoring standards are approved, so you can be sure that your intern(s) will be the best of the best.

To apply, you just have to fill out an application [HERE](#). Also, be aware of your responsibilities as a host employer, which are:

- Employ the intern at a fair market wage for the geographic area and position
- Provide the intern with an overview of the entire company
- Provide varied experience with crops, tasks and responsibilities
- Provide for periodic intern/supervisor discussion
- Allow the intern time to spend with a faculty member during an on-site visit
- Help the intern locate reasonably priced housing for the training period (you are not responsible for rent)
- Complete an intern performance questionnaire at the conclusion of training
- You can even assign the student a project during internship, but this is optional



Root Alliance Webinars: Water, Nutrients, Substrates!

I was recently invited to join the Root Alliance, which is a partnership between industry stakeholders and leading researchers who are interested in developing sustainable solutions for managing the root zone in soilless-grown horticulture.

This alliance joins expertise from the nursery and greenhouse world with our peers in soilless fruit and vegetable production to improve production management practices for all. You can find out more about the Root Alliance [HERE](#), and if you're interested in joining, I would be more than happy to talk with you about that in detail. However, today I wanted to highlight a series of webinars that we're planning for later this summer that are designed for industry professionals who want to improve root health, reduce crop losses and increase productivity.



Water, nutrients and substrates are topics universal across all horticulture ventures. These are core components of the root zone and their management is critical to any horticultural operation. The Root Alliance is developing a four-part webinar series to highlight innovative solutions in these areas.

- June 9—**Understanding the Risks of Low-Quality Water and Water Treatment Design** by Rosa Raudales, University of Connecticut
- June 16—**Customizing Recirculated Hydroponic Solutions** by Ryan Dickson, University of Arkansas
- July 21—**Cold Plasma and Ozone for Water Sanitation** by Paul Fisher, University of Florida
- August 7—**Stratified Substrates in Nursery and Greenhouse Production** by Jeb Fields, University of Florida

These webinars are co-produced by the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture and the Root Alliance. Each includes a one-hour presentation, supplementary materials and a take-home executive summary. Webinars are recorded and available for a year.

If you're a Root Alliance member, registration is free. Otherwise, registration is \$20 with a 50% discount for all four. You can register [HERE](#).

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Fields". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Jeb Fields

Editor-at-Large

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