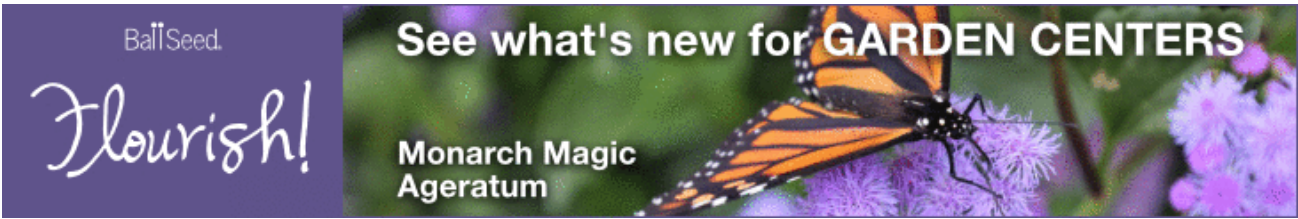


Altman Faculty Development, TN Nursery Education, Dr. Criscione & More



subscribe

**INCREASE
YOUR
PROFITS!**

with
STOCKOSORB®



GREEN SOLUTIONS LLC
AGRICULTURE & HORTICULTURE SOIL SOLUTIONS

**CLICK HERE
To Learn More**

**NOW
AVAILABLE**



CLICK TO BUY

**Plant
Development
SERVICES®**



Nursery & LANDSCAPE INSIDER

News and Commentary for the landscape and nursery market

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Altman Faculty Development
TREE Fund Scholarships
Tennessee Nursery Education
Garden Center News
Introducing the Criscione Lab
Bloomin' Easy 2026 Releases
GardenComm Communicator
Awards



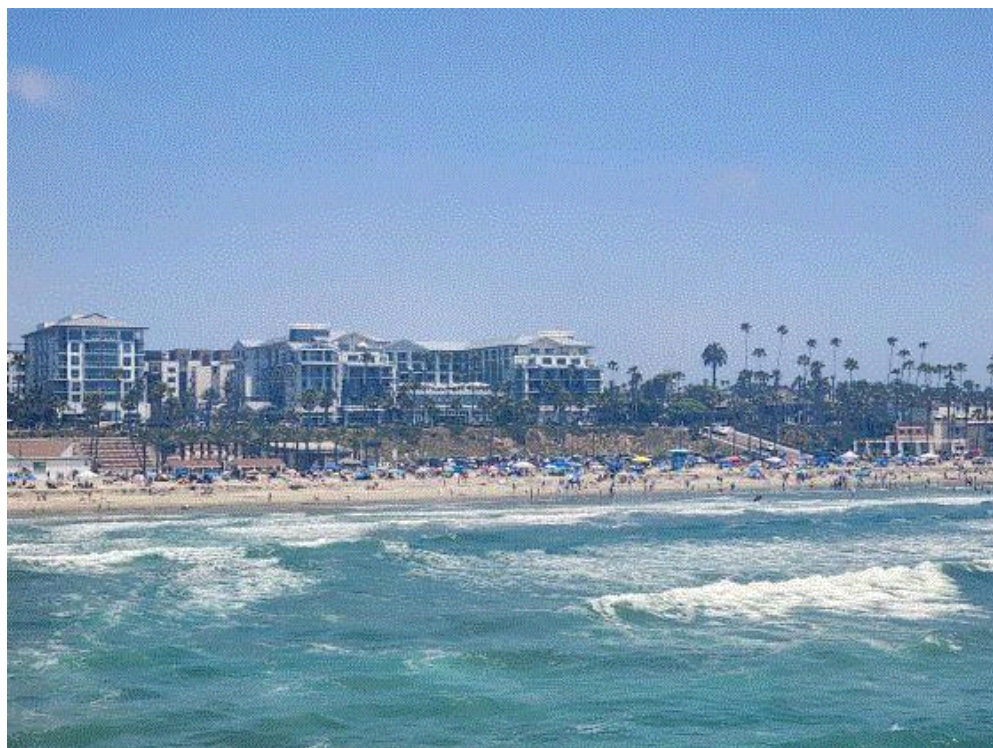
The Altman Faculty Development Program

I spent this past week in sunny California. Not exactly for a relaxing getaway, but to participate in a brand new faculty development program. This unique opportunity to participate in a first-of-its-kind team-building experience, was made possible by strong, longstanding relationships between ornamental producers and researchers across the country. Ornamental horticulture programs at universities across the country are slowly disappearing, and with those loss of positions means less support for growers nationwide. In an effort to ensure the continued partnerships, industry leader, Ken Altman of Altman Plants, met with Drs. John Dole of NC State and John Erwin of the University of Maryland to develop a program that would organize a core group of young faculty to usher in the next generation of university and grower collaborations. I was honored to be selected as one of five members of this cohort.

This cohort was organized with the ultimate goal of bringing scientists together to organize ongoing research, extension and teaching projects for years to come. The cohort has vastly



different expertise and backgrounds. I will be honest, I was a bit unsure about the nature of the program at first, but after our first week “retreat” I can say with certainty that this is an incredible opportunity that I expect to remain fruitful for a long time.



Not a bad place for a retreat, if I do say so myself.

Our first session was held in Oceanside, California, at a beachside resort—what more could you ask for? We spent three days building the team, learning about ourselves and each other, university-industry relationship building, and how we can accomplish so much as a team. We also had the opportunity to visit several production and retail facilities. We had behind-the-scenes access to breeding programs, tissue culture labs, unique production facilities and more. I particularly found our behind-the-scenes tour of a Home Depot garden center very insightful. There is so much more logistically than I realized and it is much more controlled than I had expected. A cool insight into a different side of the industry than I am accustomed to visiting.



What's in a name? Would a rose by any other smell less sweet?

As I move through the program, I am going to share more about our activities. I will introduce the other members in subsequent editions. We will each be championing a major project meant to refine our industry over the coming years, and I will share more about these projects in time. The program is sponsored by Ken Altman and the American Floral Endowment and organized by Drs. Dole and Erwin. I am truly grateful for the foresight, time, effort and commitment to developing ongoing university-industry relationships and our team.



star[®]
ROSES and PLANTS

New for 2025!

Little Mister™ Buxus

Non-Mandatory Branding
& Blight Resistant



Learn More

TREE Fund Scholarship Winners

The TREE Fund has announced the winners of their Spring 2025 scholarships. These individuals have demonstrated their dedication and passion for trees, while pursuing careers focused on tree care, management and advocacy.

Robert Felix Memorial Scholarship

Clayton Mahoney, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College—Georgia
Jackson Wilson, Michigan Tech University—Michigan
Tyler Stewart, Brigham Young University—Utah
Patience Tongo Fouelefack, College La Cite—Ottawa
Connor Will, Virginia Tech—Virginia

Bonnie Appleton Memorial Scholarship

Keely Zuber, University of Massachusetts, Amherst—Massachusetts

Larry R. Hall Memorial Scholarship

Olivia Shetterly, College of DuPage—Illinois

Will Nutter Memorial Scholarship

Owen McKinley, University of Massachusetts, Amherst—Massachusetts

Fran Ward Women in Arboriculture Scholarship

Trinity Willoughby, Pennsylvania College of Technology—Pennsylvania

John Wright Memorial Scholarship

Alex Prideaux, University of Nebraska Lincoln—Nebraska

Congratulations to all these fantastic students who will continue to speak in favor of our trees.



Nursery Education in Tennessee

If you are in or near central Tennessee, I've got an exciting opportunity for you. In just a couple weeks, a contingent of nursery production scientists from across the U.S. will come together to host a full-day grower workshop. There will be expert talks, hands-on experiences and demonstrations of best practices that you can implement in your operations immediately.

Having leading experts in substrates, fertility and irrigation together in the same room is often an opportunity too good to be true. That is precisely what's happening on July 10 at Tennessee State University. Production scientists from across the country will be in attendance. Plus, you get to see me! In all seriousness, this will not happen again. Organizing this group of experts is a challenge, and we are lucky that our colleagues at University of Tennessee and the USDA-ARS/National Arboretum have put in the effort to do so. You can find more information on the "Moneywise Irrigation and Fertilization Strategies for Container Nurseries" workshop and register [HERE](#).



Garden Center News

Most of the content I write about in this newsletter is focused on growers and landscapers—I mean this is the *Nursery & Landscape Insider* after all. However, retail garden centers are a critical member of our industry, and this week I would like to highlight a unique community for garden centers that I follow. The Garden Center Group is an organization for garden center retailers, but there are opportunities for growers, landscapers and other industry professionals to participate. Everyone is welcome—aren't we such a welcoming industry! The group organizes resources, meetings, awards and a weekly newsletter that I like to read every Monday morning.

If you buy from, sell to, or just enjoy visiting garden centers and want to stay up-to-date with the industry I recommend you checking out the group's website [HERE](#).



Introducing the Criscione Lab

If you have been following my newsletter for some time, you might recall that from time to time I like to highlight different research programs. Kristopher Criscione is a former student of mine and this past spring, he started his career with Virginia Tech as the State's Nursery Specialist. Kris has some exciting plans to support nursery growers. I asked him to introduce you to his rootzone management program and I hope you find it relevant.

Hello, NLI Readers!

It is great to contribute to Dr. Fields' newsletter again. For those who have been subscribers in the last couple years, you may remember some of the previous articles I wrote when I was a PhD student. If not (which is very likely)- please let me introduce myself. My name is Dr. Kristopher Criscione. I originally began my nursery journey at Louisiana State University with Dr. Fields. Excitingly, I am now the Nursery Production Specialist for Virginia Tech.



Instead of being located on Blacksburg's campus, I have the amazing opportunity to be located at the Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Virginia Beach. We felt this would be a wonderful moment to reintroduce myself to the newsletter, and briefly discuss the research directions my lab is moving in.

Summer has begun and we've had great weather for the last two months, so the Nursery Lab has been in sixth-gear starting research experiments. My background is in rootzone management, specifically root growth in the container. Everything we do in container production, whether it is choosing a potting soil, to how much water and fertilizer we apply, we make these decisions with the roots in mind. After all, how do we gauge if a plant is salable or healthy? We look at the roots.

With this in mind, my lab is exploring how we can improve our root growth, from agrochemical applications, irrigation management, to our potting soils. Follow below for details regarding specific studies:

An important part of my program is finding ways growers can get better and stronger rooting, or "fill" the container faster with slow-growing root systems. Most producers will apply plant growth regulators (PGRs) to make a more compact shoot or terminate flowering ... but how often do you hear of someone applying it to an established root system to hasten growth? Our goal is to fill the container with roots faster for slow-growing nursery stock (Abelia and Azalea) and produce a product in shorter production times.



We are also studying how modifying some popular BMP irrigation schedules (cyclical irrigation) can be more adoptable or attractive for producers. Cyclic irrigation may be complicated to incorporate into irrigation management programs; however, its benefits can be impactful for plant growth, water use and fertilizer leaching. In this study, we are trying to answer how long a grower needs to cyclically irrigate and still receive all the same benefits as if they were cyclically irrigating for the entire production season. Plus, we are getting a better understanding of how we can use irrigation management to engineer our root systems.



Another goal is to build a strong understanding of how roots can change how well our potting soils hold air and water for the plant. More specifically, how do these factors change root development?

Some other questions we are exploring: Can we engineer our potting soils to extend hydration windows for water-stressed plants? Or when the conditions are very hot and dry, can we enable our plant to keep photosynthesizing while accessing more water?

If any of this research interests you, [please reach out!](#)

Bloomin' Easy Set to Release 2026 Varieties

If you're heading to Cultivate, be sure to stop by the Bloomin' Easy booth to check out the new varieties set to hit retail in 2026. A whopping seventeen varieties are set to hit the nursery shelves next year from Bloomin' Easy, and you would be hard pressed to not find something that interests you. While you'll have to check out their booth for all the exciting action, two of these releases are going to be groundbreakers and I thought it would be worth highlighting them now to get you prepped.



Bubble Bath *Hydrangea paniculata*

“Bubble Bath hydrangea is very compact and flowers so much you can’t see the foliage – it’s hard to believe what you’re seeing,” says Bloomin’ Easy Plants President DeVonne Friesen. “Finished growers are going to love that Bubble Bath ships easily on a shelved rack in full bloom. And Forged by Fire Silene is a revolutionary improvement of a native species which is typically uninspiring. The combination of its tidy form, incredible flower power, and fire red color is another giant leap forward in breeding innovation.” I know I’m excited for these two and can’t wait to see the rest at Cultivate. Make sure you stop by.



Forged by Fire *Silene virginica*

GardenComm Communicator Awards

As somewhat of a writer myself, it is always nice to see science communicators get the recognition they deserve. While I know each of you appreciate the effort it takes to develop a strong communication style (or whatever it is that I do), all too often efforts can go unnoticed and underappreciated. That's what's great about the GardenComm awards, which celebrate excellence in garden communication.

The 2025 honor recipients have been recognized as exceptional leaders in garden communication. These individuals celebrate achievements that have impacted the field and demonstrated exceptional service to the industry. The awards will be presented at the Gather & Grow Mega Connect event held in advance of Cultivate '25 in Ohio.

This year's recipients are:

Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp—Hall of Fame

Katie Elzer-Peters and Jessica Walliser—Fellows

Heather Holm—Green Medal Sustainability Award

Allan Armitage – Cynthia Westcott Scientific Writing Award

Perla Sofia Curbelo-Santiago—Emergent Communicator Award

Iseli Nursery – Wilfred J. Jung Distinguished Service Medal Award

Piet Oudolf – Honorary Member

Sandra Reid – Corporate Leadership and Impact Award

Congrats to this year's honorees!

Think big,



Jeb Fields

Editor-at-Large

Nursery & Landscape Insider

This has been received by 31,755 of the hardest-working horticulturists in show business!

If you're interested in reaching 32,182 clients who eagerly await every *Nursery & Landscape Insider* and surely read every word, contact **Kim Brown** ASAP and she'll hook you up.

