

RCAs, IR-4 request, Farwest & Terra Nova and offer this workshop



WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 2025

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**Green Profit's**  
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Plant Trialing Conference  
Farwest and Terra Nova

**PROVEN  
TO SELL  
MORE**



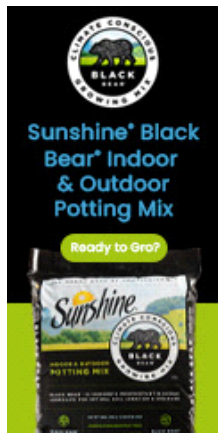
## The RCAs

As I said in my last *buzz!*, Cultivate'25's trade show floor was packed with great retail-related items, plants and products alike. Last week I included a few of the ones that caught my eye last week, and this week I'm including those items that got the attention of your garden retailer compatriots as they walked the show looking for the Retailers' Choice Award submissions.

The Garden Center Group's Danny Summers, chief instigator for these awards, tells me that 54 items were submitted for this year's awards. The crew narrowed it down to just 15 to receive the actual Retailers' Choice Award. But as they say in Hollywood, it's an honor to just be nominated, right?

Okay, without further ado, the 15 products and plants to receive the awards this year include:

**Hydrangea Haba Soft Pink from Ball Seed.** This is a floral hydrangea from the folks at



Aldershot that is meant for hanging baskets (the "Haba" stands for **"hanging basket"**). It's loaded with double flowers that cascade to create a beautiful basket. And of course, this Soft Pink can easily become Soft Blue with some pH adjustments. It's 10 weeks in production from a 3- to 4-in. dormant liner. Ideal for Easter and Mother's Day.



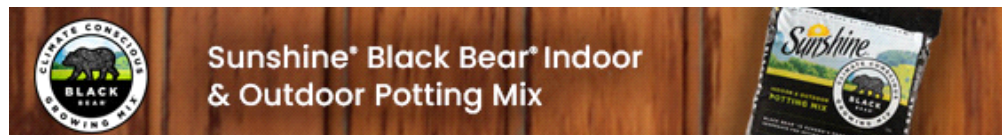
**Dahlias Dalyla Lace and Venti series from Selecta One.** I think this was the case of "gosh, Selecta's new dahlias look great, let's give them all an RCA." Fair enough! Both series have multiple color options. The Dalyla Lace series' newest additions have big blooms and some beautiful bicolors, like the Dalyla Pink Lace with white-tipped pink petals (top row in the photo below). The Ventis are double-flowered with some seriously neat bicolors, such as PinkBurst (on bottom shelf). This one caught my eye a full 24 hours before the RCAs were even announced!







***Rudbeckia hirta* Solar Sisters from Bloomin' Easy.** This is a totally touchable pincushion-type rudbeckia. Featuring large double flowers with touches of sunny yellows and oranges, the flower heads gradually deepen to rich copper tones with the onset of cooler nights. Zones 7-9.



## Brunnera, Pampas and Begonia

**Brunnera Frost King from Darwin Perennials.** I've always been a fan of brunnera, and again, this caught my eye before the award was given out. And you can see why! Its *very* large leaves have very strong venation with lovely silvery coloring. It also has a uniform habit both in pots and in the landscape. And another reason it caught my eye—signage indicating it's deer-proof, thanks to its super-rough leaves.





**Pampas Grass Tiny Pampa from Dig Plants.** Sometimes ornamental grasses can be just too much. Like pampas grass, for instance. But Dig Plants' Tiny Pampa is just 2 ft. tall—and that includes its flowering stalks! It's also missing the sharpness of its leaves that other varieties have. This well-behaved pampas grass is ideal for smaller living spacings, patio gardens and even as a container plant.



**Begonia hybrid I'CONIA Bacio Lemon from Dümmer Orange.** The medium-to-large lemon-yellow flowers pop against the deep green/bronze leaves. It's a slightly cascading variety they say is heat and stress tolerant. I received one as a sample this spring and I can attest to all

three of those characteristics!



## Lily, Hydrangea and Ajuga

**Asiatic Lily Looks Tiny Massive from Growing Colors.** As Danny insinuated with his description of Tiny Massive, with real flowers like Tiny Massive, it's not surprising that some folks mistake AI-generated plants as real! The combo of nearly black and bright yellow and in such a pattern is just an incredible work of breeding. Also note how large those buds are, with 3-6 flower buds per stem. The retailers who nominated Tiny Massive said this would be a fantastic plant for fall sales.





***Hydrangea macrophylla* Centennial Ruby from Monrovia.** Monrovia will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, and in celebration they have released Centennial Ruby. This reblooming bigleaf hydrangea has ruby-red mophead blooms that darken as they age—and they can last up to 130 days! It also has exceptionally sturdy stems and thick dark green leaves in a 3 ft. by 3 ft. habit. I have more about this stunning plant and Monrovia's 100<sup>th</sup> in another edition of *buZZ!* This is a good time to mention that computer screens are not very good at replicating anything with reds and purples in them.



**Ajuga Princess Leia from North Carolina Farms.** The folks at North Carolina Farms, the liner producer of this variety, give full credit for the award to Concept Plants, who introduced this stunner of an ajuga. Normally a bit of a background plant, this green and white variegated plant stands out in a planting. And when it's flowering in spring, its deep purple flowers only highlight its presence.



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



## Azalea, Caladium and Potato Skin Poles

**Azalea Encore Autumn Kiss from Plant Development Services Inc.** There's been some hype around Autumn Kiss—and with good reason! Its bicolor blooms—with dark pink centers, a sweet pink middle and deep pink edges—is a one-of-a-kind variegation. The shrub itself is compact at 3 to 4 ft. tall and wide. As an Encore, you can bet it puts on a show in spring, then again later in the season.





**Caladium Heart to Heart Midnight Oil from Proven Winners.** I saw this plant on a tour of the Proven Winners booth first thing as the show opened and knew it was a winner. The leaf's surface literally looked like an oil slick, but it's all leaf! Nearly black, this caladium blends deep green and red tones on arrow-shaped leaves. The "oil slick" looks like it's moving, too, with its wavy leaf margins. As a caladium it grows in shade, but Midnight Oil is at its darkest when in direct sunlight.



**Climb-itt Climbing Poles, Stakes, Wire and Clips from Proven Winners' leafjoy.** We've talked about these products before, and they've also won a Cool Product Award (similar to a



Retailers' Choice Award) at TPIE. As a reminder, these are plant supports made from elephant grass and potato skins, and while they last for years indoors, they begin to break down in a landfill or even compost pile I would imagine. What's news here—at least for me—is the really nice retail display. Everything your houseplant parents are looking for to support their plant babies, all in one spot.



## Catharanthus, Tomato and Petunia

We're down to our last three ...

**Catharanthus hybrid Soiree Flamenco Electric Salmon Eye and Plum Velvet from Suntory Flowers.** When you can't decide between two colors, give them both an award! Both of these new colors in the Soiree series are stunners. What makes them different from other vincas is their ruffled and fringed petals. Both are bicolors, with Plum Velvet having a white fringe and Electric Salmon Eye having a gradation in dark to softer salmon.



**Tomatoes Party Ball and Akoya from Syngenta Flowers.** I can't wait to try these two patio-sized tomatoes next year! First, Partyball—the lower plant in the photo—is a compact and determinate tomato with cherry-sized fruits and resistance to Tomato Mosaic Virus (strains 1 and 2) and tolerance to Late Blight. Akoya (above Partyball) produces nearly black fruit that gradually develop some red color—and that's the stage at which you eat them. This one is more of a 10-in. or 12-in. basket item. And wouldn't it be spectacular as a fall item?



**Petunia Funhouse Black Widow, also from Syngenta Flowers.** A second black item from Syngenta, this petunia caught the attention of judges for its use as a design element for fall containers. With fall being the one of the top seasons for decorating (if not the top), folks are looking for more design elements that are appropriate for fall and Halloween. And honestly, it's just made for the season and can pair up with just about any color. Just look how it makes the yellow petunias pop!





Whew! That's all 15 RCA winners for Cultivate'25. Did you find anything at the show that you want to give your own award? Drop me a note about it [HERE](#).



## IR-4 Survey Request

Are you a grower-retailer? Then the IR-4 Project—the federally funded program to help obtain pest control registrations on minor or specialty crops—has a request.

The IR-4 Environmental Horticulture Program (that's specifically for ornamental crops) is requesting that you tell them about your pest management needs. Their biennial Grower and Extension Survey will gather up the answers, and this will help them understand specialty crop growers' needs both nationally and regionally. If you're grumbling, "Gosh, I wish someone would develop an ABC to take care of XYZ," the survey is a great place to start.

Click [HERE](#) to access the survey. Or, level up your idea for a product you have in mind by completing this [Project Request Form](#). Or, you can connect directly with someone on the IR-4 team to discuss your crop protection needs. Do that [HERE](#).

They have a workshop, too. IR-4 will host the next biennial Environmental Horticulture Workshop from October 7-8, 2025, in Kansas City, Missouri. At this event, stakeholders involved in the Environmental Horticulture Program will collaborate to set national and regional research priorities for the next two-year cycle. [Register and learn more here](#).

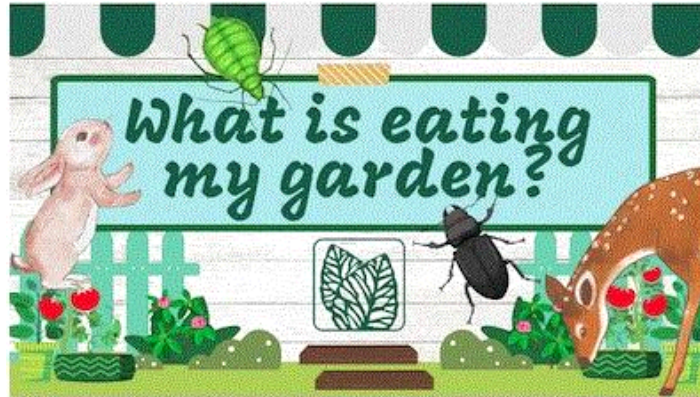


## Offer This Workshop

Continuing my occasional look at garden center e-newsletters, I found a notice for a workshop *all of you* should be offering. Mainly because I want to take this workshop for my own personal edification.

The workshop is “What Is Eating My Garden?” at Lowe’s Greenhouse in Ohio. Here’s the description:

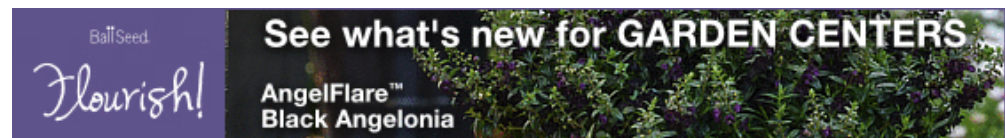
*“Is your once-thriving garden now full of chewed leaves, holes in plants, or mysterious damage? Join our landscape manager, Chad, for a free class on August 2 at 10 a.m. discussing how to protect plants from the summer heat and the pests that come with it! You’ll learn how to identify the most common garden pests—and what you can do to safely and effectively get rid of them.”*



I suspect all of these creatures plus a groundhog and earwigs are my culprits.

The workshop covers how to recognize pest damage, common culprits, treatment options, preventative tips, deadheading protocols, watering issues, etc. It’s like a self-care course for your garden, with you as your garden’s proxy!

I’ve been a lifelong gardener, and since moving to a more country-ish setting, the insects and animals are enough to make me quit the whole thing. Lowe’s has it right—if you want people to be successful gardeners, you need to help them with plant protection, whether that’s protecting the garden from bugs, furry mammals, microscopic pathogens or weather.



## Plant Trialing Conference Deadline Extended

All-America Selections (AAS) wants to extend the Early Bird Registration Discount for anyone interested in attending the [2025 International Plant Trialing Conference](#). You can still access a substantial savings if you register on or before August 15.

The conference itself will take place October 13-15, 2025, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Bloomington, Minnesota, which is conveniently located just minutes from the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.



What does one do at an International Plant Trialing Conference? You'll have two full days of educational sessions covering ornamentals, edibles, trialing techniques and industry trends. They'll have sessions for all levels of attendees in the form of general sessions. More specialized breakout sessions will be targeted for both new and experienced plant trialers. You'll also be immersed in a place with folks from around the world who are doing the same thing you are doing—trialing plants. It's your opportunity to learn and share.

You can find all the details about the conference, including the full schedule, speaker lineup, individual session descriptions and more in the online brochure [HERE](#). Or, head directly [HERE](#) to register. And reserve your room [HERE](#).



## Farwest and Terra Nova

I certainly hope you scheduled "Attend Farwest Show" in your calendars for Wednesday, August 20 through Friday, August 22. Why? Because it's a nice region to unofficially end summer, and because the Farwest Show has plenty of education and vendors to offer. Did you know they have more than 44 hours of educational seminars for nursery, grower and retailer folks like yourselves?

If you haven't registered for Farwest yet, you can still get in on the Early Bird discount. You have until July 31 to save upwards of \$40 per person when it comes to expo and seminar passes—you can buy breakfast and lunch with that! Every little bit helps. Oh, and if you're a student, you are eligible for a free three-day Trade Show Pass and a discounted three-day Education Pass. Get yourself in on the Early Bird discount [HERE](#). If you choose to pay full price August 1 and after, that same link will work.

**FARWEST**  
PORTLAND 2025

During that same week as Farwest, Terra Nova Nurseries will be hosting its 2025 Open House at the company's facility in Canby, Oregon. Located just 35 minutes south of the Oregon Convention Center, it's an easy educational opportunity for you and your crew.

Why make the drive down to Canby? Because you'll be treated to a first look at some of Terra Nova's newest introductions. If you didn't catch them at Cultivate, you'll see them there! You'll also have the chance to chat with the breeders themselves about their breeding perspectives. Did I mention their daily giveaways? Go, see some great plants, learn about them directly from the folks who work with them daily, and you may even win something—I bet it's a plant! You may even chat with the nerdiest plant guy I know (that would be Chuck Pavlich, and he knows he's the nerdiest).



You may see this kniphofia at Terra Nova's Open House. IMHO, kniphofia is making a comeback, and Poco Butter Brickle is here for it!

The Terra Nova Open House takes place August 18-22, and they'll be open:

- Monday, Aug. 18: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Tuesday, Aug. 19: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Wednesday, Aug. 20: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Thursday, Aug. 21: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Friday, Aug. 22: By appointment only, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.

For more information or to schedule a Friday appointment, please contact Terra Nova Nurseries directly at [sales@terranovanurseries.com](mailto:sales@terranovanurseries.com).





If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, etc., drop me a line if you'd like at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).



Ellen Wells  
Senior Editor-at-Large  
Green Profit

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**GROWERS AND RETAILERS FLIP OVER.**