

Year of the Ficus, Plus an H-2A webinar and Wage & Benefit Survey



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TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

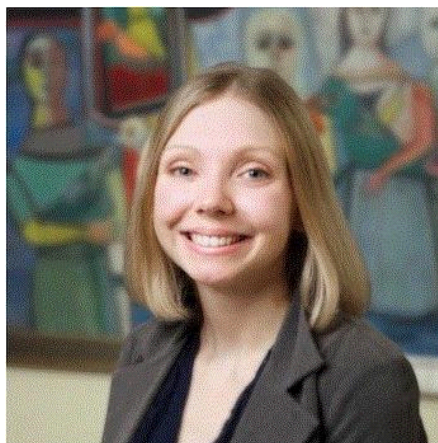
H-2A Webinar Alert!
Wage & Benefit Survey
Year of the Ficus
Cultivation Station



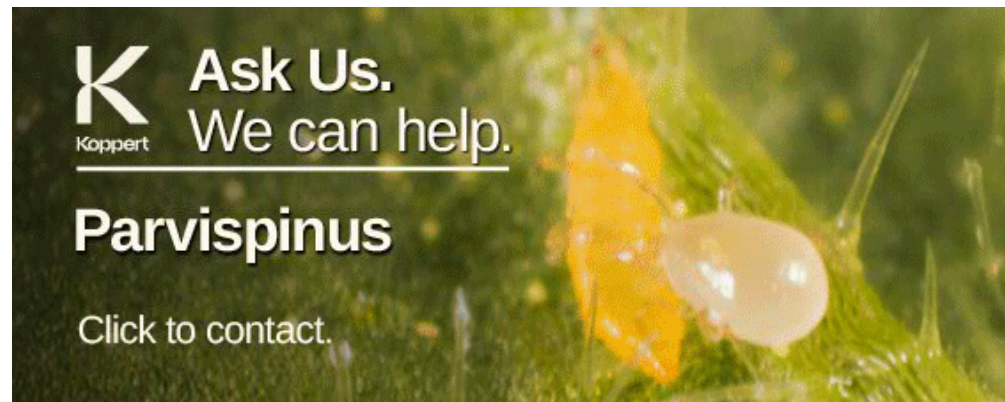
H-2A Webinar Alert!

While Sustainabloom may be a sustainable floriculture initiative launched by the American Floral Endowment (AFE)—not so much a tropics or foliage program—it is offering a webinar **TOMORROW, September 9**, with a topic that's apropos to all of horticulture, including you foliage folks.

The “Bloom Without Burnout: A Practical Guide to the H-2A Visa Program” webinar with immigration attorney Meagan Kirchner of Kirchner Law PLLC will give you an overview of the H-2A visa program that's tailored for folks who run small to mid-sized growing and greenhouse operations. What you'll experience during the webinar are the basics of how the H-2A program works, who qualifies for it, what obligations you (the employer) take on for it, common pitfalls of using the program and how to plan ahead. You may be new to H-2A or a veteran of its use, but either way this webinar will explore how the program can work for you and give you knowledge about seasonal hiring.



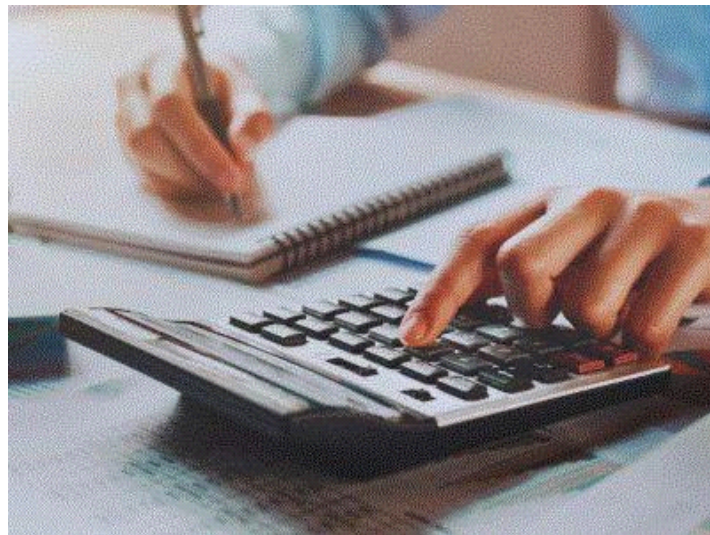
Like I said, this webinar takes place TOMORROW, September 9 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern. Register for it [HERE](#).



Wage & Benefit Survey

It's fall and you know what that means. It's time for you to take the Salary & Benefits Survey! The *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* and AmericanHort's Salary & Benefits Survey is now available for you to fill out and benefit from. We're partnering with Industry Insights, who'll be crunching the data for us.

We've teamed up with AmericanHort again on this decades-old survey to help us provide you a high-level and more useful tool. Companies like yours that take the survey can better understand salary and benefit trends, and see how their businesses compare to other survey participants. The survey includes company demographics, staffing, and benefits and salary data on up to 34 different job titles across full-time, part-time and seasonal employees.



But in order for us to provide the best data to you, we need you to participate!

And you don't have to be an AmericanHort member to benefit. *All* survey respondents will get the full report prepared by Industry Insights. Company size doesn't matter, either—anyone and everyone can participate! Also, if you've participated in taking the survey in previous years, some data will automatically be populated for you, saving you time. Convenience is key for making this survey work for everyone.

And, of course, key parts of the data will be published in the December issue of *GrowerTalks* and

the January issue of *Green Profit*.

GO [HERE](#) to fill out the survey, which, by the way, is confidentially collected and maintained by Industry Insights' professional data team and securely stored. Privacy is key, too!



Year of the Ficus

Each year around this time the [National Garden Bureau](#) (NGB) announces the plants they've chosen for their "Year of" programs. Just a few years ago they started adding a houseplant category. This time around the NGB members have deemed 2026 as the Year of the Ficus. Great choice!



The "Year of the" program chooses genera specifically for the North American market that are easy to grow and genetically diverse. I asked NGB's Executive Director Diane Blazek why ficus was chosen for 2026.

"Because they are so popular!" she replied. "We do a vote among members and they chose ficus for 2026. It's not just popularity, but it's also how easy they are to obtain and grow, and if there is interest in some of the newer varieties being introduced."

Beginning November 1, NGB will have a bunch of new ficus photos provided by its members downloadable from its website for use by breeders, brokers, seed companies, growers, retailers and garden communicators for use in their marketing initiatives. NGB will also have PDFs of fact sheets, flyers, handouts, signs, posters, etc. available. Use these to promote non-branded, non-specific varieties to consumers.

NGB will start its consumer publicity of the "Year of the Ficus" (and the other five categories) beginning in January—which is sooner than you think.



Cultivation Station: Ficus

Since ficus will be NGB's featured houseplant for next year, it's the perfect occasion to feature it in another episode of Cultivation Station—the semi-occasional how-to for growing a particular

tropical/foliage crop.

As I did for the last featured Cultivation Station plant (Monstera Thai Constellation) I asked ChatGPT why ficus are such popular plants. It spit out three reasons in less than 10 seconds:

Ficus are dripping with decorative impact. It pointed out that many ficus species have bold, glossy leaves or dramatic shapes that make them standout focal points in a room. And, better yet, they fit within both modern and traditional décor.

There are a variety of forms. As alluded to above, they come in so many different forms—trees, shrubs, small plants—making them versatile for spaces from small apartments to large living rooms or office lobbies.

Longevity and adaptability. No kidding, I have a friend who purchased a *Ficus benjamina* nearly 20 years ago and it's still going strong. As ChatGPT said about ficus, "With proper care, ficus can live for years, even decades. They're resilient once acclimated and can adapt to typical indoor conditions like filtered light and average humidity."

The market has been focused on *Ficus lyrata* because it's become one of the trendiest plants out there. But for this edition of Cultivation Station let's give some love to the tried-and-true *Ficus elastica*, the rubber plant. They're *everywhere*—maybe even more so than the fiddleleaf fig.



Total Crop Time from 72 liner to finish: 26 to 28 weeks for 6-in., 36 weeks for 8-in. and 40 weeks for 10-in. (1 plant per pot for each of those)

Soil/Media: A well-drained mix with plenty of air porosity and moisture retention

pH: 6.5 to 7.0

EC: 2.0 to 2.5

Temperature: 60 to 80F (15 to 26C)

Humidity: 60% to 80%

Nutrition: "Ficus are generally pretty heavy feeders," Ball Horticultural's Foliage and Tropicals Technical Manager Andrew Britten told me. "I would stay with a balanced feed, maintaining an EC around 2.0 to 2.5."

Light Level: 3,000-5,000 f.c.

Pests and Diseases: Watch for mealybugs, scale, thrips, Colletotrichum

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions for content, email me about them at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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