

Financial Literacy, Surveys & Scholarships



News and commentary for the nursery & landscape market

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE **greenPROFIT** MAGAZINE

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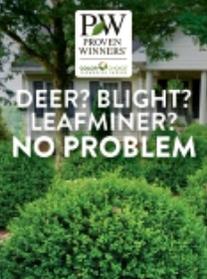


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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Want More Financial Literacy?
- Student Survey
- New Global Research
- Scholarship
- HRI Scholarship Program



Nepeta 'Catwalk Queen'
NEW! 2025-2026

Want More Financial Literacy?

We all joined this industry because we like working with plants, be it growing, maintaining, breeding or anything in between. Plants are our passion. So when plant-based training comes around, it's easy to spend the extra time learning more about plant production and maintenance. However, so much of our industry relies on business acumen for success. If you're like me, financials can often be seen as a burden or something that we have to deal with that keeps us away from the horticulture. It doesn't have to be that way.

**Financial Literacy for
Managers**

PRESENTED BY
Scott Hackworth, CPA
Industry Insights



MARCH 4 & 5 | 11:00 AM-12:00 PM ET

Next Wednesday and Thursday (March 3 and 4), AmericanHort is offering a free, two-part webinar series on financial literacy training geared directly for the green industry. This training is directed for managers, but I'm sure nearly everyone that participates will gain skills or knowledge in an incredibly critical, yet often overlooked, subject. This series is designed for folks who want more confidence using financial information to guide their operations.

Participants will learn how to:

- Read and interpret key financial statements
- Connect operational decisions to financial results
- Understand why profitable businesses can still struggle with cash flow
- Evaluate expansion, equipment and production decisions with greater clarity
- Make smarter, more confident management choices using financial insight

You have to sign up for each individually and they're free for members (\$99 for non-members), so there's no way you won't get a return on your investment. Get more information [HERE](#).

But it doesn't stop there! If you want to further your financial literacy, AmericanHort has even more in store. On March 11, AmericanHort's [Grow Forward](#) program will focus on "Creating Health and Wealth in Business and Life." This is yet another free program for members.

Finally, for those who want a deep dive into financial literacy, they're offering a three-part [Open Book Management for and Ownership Mindset](#) class on March 12, March 25 and April 1. These three classes will cost a nominal fee of \$99, but by this time you'll be miles ahead of the competition and fully prepared to tackle the financial challenges of business management and ownership.



Student Survey: Propagation Substrates

This past fall, I traveled to Germany to visit with friends and colleagues from around the world at the International Growing Media Conference. It's always a blast meeting people who share my odd passions for growing media and it's especially exciting when we meet students following their growing media journeys. That's why I'm excited to share this request from one of the students I met at the conference.

Victoria Adams is pursuing her Ph.D. at the Center for Agroecology, Water & Resilience at Coventry University in the UK. Victoria's Ph.D. is focused on "Evaluating peat-free media suitable for the propagation of high-quality ornamental transplants"—a topic I'm very excited about. Part of her research is to explore the needs of growers, propagators, substrate manufacturers and researchers and how those relate to the development of peat-free propagation options. I know there are many growers in the U.S. exploring peat-free propagation and even more that are interested in the concept.

If you have any interest, I hope you have a couple of minutes to fill out [THIS SURVEY](#) for Victoria. The responses are completely anonymous and will help shape the future of global propagation practices.



New Scholarship Supports Global Research

This is some exciting news that came out a few weeks ago and I've been meaning to get it into a newsletter. This January, the American Floral Endowment (AFE) announced a brand-new scholarship program that will support students traveling internationally to learn, build relationships and gain experience in an unfamiliar setting. The Royal Heins International Floriculture Research Scholarship Fund was developed to support semester-long international research experiences for Ph.D. students to grow both scientifically and professionally.

This fund was generated through a generous commitment from Dr. Royal Heins, a Professor Emeritus at Michigan State University and a longtime industry researcher.

"I chose to work with AFE because it has a long-standing, trusted track record of supporting scholarships and research that advance the floriculture industry," stated Dr. Royal Heins.

Throughout his career in academia and industry, Dr. Heins emphasized pairing strong scientific foundations with real-world applications. Colleagues and industry leaders frequently note his influence on modern greenhouse production practices and on the many students he mentored.

The annual scholarship will award between \$30,000 and \$35,000(!) and will be awarded annually for a student enrolled in a U.S. or Canadian Ph.D. Program. These funds are designed to remove financial barriers that often limit international research experiences. The funds can support housing, stipends and travel costs, and are meant to support innovative and experiential learning.

I think we can all attest that this is an amazing opportunity provided by an amazing individual and will certainly change the lives of several students as the program moves into the future.



The scholarship will go live next year, with the first applications due May 1, 2027, so any students interested have plenty of time to prepare their applications. You can learn more about the scholarship and Dr. Heins [HERE](#).

With an opportunity like this and a one-year lead time, there's no excuse for not applying!



A Deep Dive Into the HRI Scholarship Program

The following was provided by Jennifer Gray with the Horticultural Research Institute (HRI) on how we can power the workforce pipeline through scholarships.

As experienced growers retire and operations grow more complex, horticulture businesses are asking a critical question: Who's coming next?

Plants may be the product, but people are the engine of the horticulture industry. From nursery and greenhouse production to landscape design and plant breeding to plant health, businesses across the green industry depend on skilled, well-trained professionals. As workforce shortages and operational demands grow, building and sustaining a dependable pipeline of industry-ready talent is a top priority.

Deliberate Investment in the Future Workforce

The [HRI Scholarship Program](#) makes a deliberate investment in that pipeline. During the 2025–2026 academic year, [HRI awarded \\$62,000 in scholarship support to 18 students](#) pursuing horticulture-related degrees at institutions across the country. These scholarships, funded by generous donors, are not simply financial aid—they represent a commitment to build industry infrastructure through investments in the people who'll make up the green industry in the years ahead.

Scholarships Built for Industry Careers

The HRI Scholarship Program is intentionally designed to empower students pursuing careers in the green industry. That includes students like Ella May, recipient of the Timothy S. and Palmer W. Bigelow, Jr. Scholarship, who's preparing for a career in greenhouse production, with a focus on science-based growing practices that improve efficiency and plant performance.

Others, such as Landon Erbrick, recipient of the Dennis & Harriet Walters Memorial Scholarship, are pursuing advanced horticulture degrees with plans to work in commercial greenhouse and nursery operations where they'll bring technical expertise and management skills directly into production environments.

For James Hines IV, recipient of the John B. & Elizabeth Wight Memorial Scholarship and a first-year horticulture student at Tennessee Tech, education is directly tied to succession planning.

"My goal is to honor my family's legacy by modernizing our business practices and introducing more sustainable solutions for the future," he wrote, reflecting the commitment many scholarship recipients bring to strengthening family-owned nursery businesses.

Students pursuing business and market-facing roles are also represented. Paul Crocker, recipient of the Susie & Bruce Usrey Education Scholarship, is preparing for a career in horticultural sales, marketing and business development, areas that are increasingly critical as companies compete for customers and talent alike.

Reflecting the Full Scope of the Industry

The HRI Scholarship Program is supported by a portfolio of endowed funds, each reflecting different priorities within the horticulture industry. Scholarships such as the Carville M. Akehurst Memorial Scholarship, the Bryan A. Champion Memorial Scholarship, the Gunter Mecking Memorial Scholarship and the Spring Meadow-Proven Winners Scholarship collectively support students across production, plant science, landscape architecture and business disciplines.

This year's Spring Meadow-Proven Winners Scholarship recipients, for example, include students pursuing woody plant production and plant breeding and improvement, fields that directly influence product quality, availability and market success. These disciplines play a critical role in helping green industry businesses meet customer demand while adapting to changing production and market conditions.

For Katelyn Boyce, recipient of the Bryan A. Champion Memorial Scholarship and a graduate student in plant breeding at The Ohio State University, that intersection of innovation and application is central to her career goals.

"I'm deeply committed to horticulture because I see it as both an art and a science—one that brings joy to people while also addressing larger environmental concerns," she explained, reflecting the blend of technical expertise and industry awareness that defines many HRI scholars.

Attracting Talent to the Industry

For students deciding where to commit their time and energy, scholarships send a simple, important message: The horticulture industry wants you. The HRI Scholarship Program reinforces horticulture as a viable, long-term career path by showing students that industry leaders are willing to invest in their success. That early signal plays a real role in attracting talent and keeping it pointed toward careers in horticulture.

By easing financial pressure, HRI scholarships allow students to focus on learning, skill development and career preparation, ensuring they enter the workforce ready to contribute, rather than simply credentialed. For businesses, that translates into graduates who understand industry expectations and are prepared to step into operational roles with confidence.

Building the Future, Together

The growth of the HRI Scholarship Program reflects a shared belief among donors that workforce development is essential to the industry's future. Reaching \$62,000 in scholarship support this year marks an important milestone—one only made possible by the individuals, families and companies who believe in investing in people.

The 2025–2026 HRI Scholarship Program recipients represent the next generation of growers, managers, designers and business professionals who'll help shape horticulture in the years ahead. As workforce demands continue to evolve, sustained investment in emerging professionals will remain essential to the industry's long-term competitiveness and growth.

Applications for the 2026–2027 HRI Scholarship Program open March 1. For more information, visit hriresearch.org.



Think big,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeb Fields".

Jeb Fields
Editor-at-Large
Nursery & Landscape Insider

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