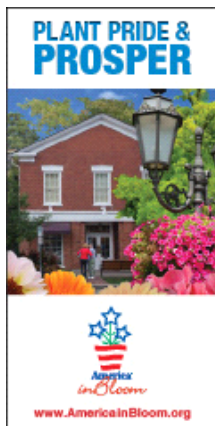
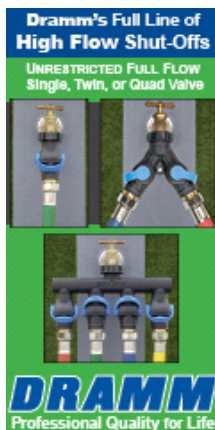


PW News x 2, reassessing your greenhouse and insurance, PPA's PPOY



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Home Garden Prop Tray
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PPA PPOY
Reassess Your Insurance

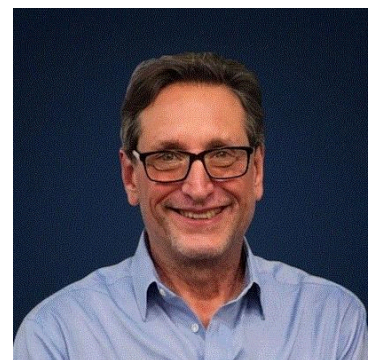


Ball Culture Guide
THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
SEED GERMINATION
By JIM NAU
Order Your Copy Today!
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Help with Your Greenhouse Situation

For the last few weeks, I've been mentioning the products and plants I spied at Cultivate'26. As anyone who has attended the yearly trade show can tell you, one of the biggest lures of the event is the people. Old friends, new connections—these are the sweet spots for so many of us who attend.

Such as, I ran into longtime industry friend Chuck Sierke at the show. Chuck has represented a number of greenhouse manufacturers over the years, with a specialty in retail greenhouses. He has recently started his own independent greenhouse consultation business, Trans-Sphere Corp, where he offers design assistance, renovation planning, sourcing and project coordination services.



He'll help anyone who's working with greenhouse projects—from growers and garden centers to universities and other retail operations—to find cost-effective solutions to materials, renovation best practices and more. Trans-Sphere's three-step plan goes from offering an assessment of the client's current conditions, to having Chuck provide recommendations and an RFQ, and—for the full program—have Chuck use his experience all the way through the purchase negotiations.

If greenhouse materials are not your forte, this offers you lower risk and better value. Whatever the step, Chuck is in it to represent your best interests. Consider him to be a kind of buyer's agent. Questions? Drop Chuck an email [HERE](#).

Cultivate's Career Day

I also ran into a few students involved with the [Seed Your Future](#) Career Day program at Cultivate. Participating in the career day were 43 students and teachers from across the U.S.—more than double the participants involved in the inaugural event in 2025.



Susan Bacus Morgan speaking with SYF students.

With Seed Your Future's president Broch Martindale reminding them that you can't pursue careers you don't know exist, the students toured dozens of exhibitor booths (including Ball Publishing). They saw a full range of career possibilities, too—from growers and nurseries to designers, brokers and media personnel. Writing for the horticulture trade? Yes, it's a job!

I want to focus on one comment from the industry perspective about the importance of having SYF students tour the show. Susan Bacus Morgan, marketing and brand manager of Star Roses and Plants, said this about students stopping by the booth:

"There's something for everybody. If your major is focused on technology, finance, customer service, marketing ... really anything ... there is a career opportunity for you in our wonderful industry."

How is it you learn about horticultural career options unless those positions are visible and in the career conversations? And that's exactly what Seed Your Future is doing—getting our career possibilities some visibility.

If you're interested in being involved in a Seed Your Future Career Day event at an upcoming industry show, contact [Courtney Dyal](#) for more information.

Heliopsis 'Forged in Fire'
New to Proven Winners
Perennials for 2026-2027!



Oasis's Home Garden Propagation Tray

Austin Bryant from Heart of Florida Greenhouses showed me an Oasis Grower Solutions' product while at Cultivate and I included it in *Tropical Topics* last week (you can read it [HERE](#)). I had meant to stop by the Oasis booth to check out another new home-gardener product I saw in the New Product Display but, well, you know how busy Cultivate can be.

But I want to tell you about it because you'll want to have the RhizoPlug Sheet Propagation Kit on hand at your store. There are so many gardeners who get *really into* the hobby of starting their own plants, and this kit makes the process easier and cleaner. The kit brings the convenience of rooting in Oasis's pest- and pathogen-free engineered substrate to a scale appropriate for home use.



I reached out to Oasis to get a little more information on the prop kit. Jolene Hansen, Strategic Marketing Lead for Oasis Grower Solutions, had this to say about why they created this product for consumers:

"Gardeners want something more than we've had in the past," she wrote. "This product bridges that gap. Whether the final user is a grower-retailer propagating themselves or a home gardener nurturing a deeper connection to plants—or maybe considering a career shift into horticulture—they can experience a substrate that professional propagators use. I don't know of any other retail kit that accomplishes that specialized experience in quite the same way this one does."

And what makes this different is the substrate itself. "This is not a scaled-down consumer version of OASIS RhizoPlug Sheet," Jolene explained. "This is exactly the same substrate that professional commercial growers who use OASIS RhizoPlug substrates purchase for propagation. It's packaged with some extras and the smaller home grower or home gardener in mind."

With winter approaching and folks looking for ways to get their gardening itch scratched while confined indoors, these kits can be called into service. Here's the [LINK](#) to learn more about them.



Two from Proven Winners

I have two announcements from Proven Winners. The first is that they've brought on a new Senior Vice President of Marketing. Shira Schwarz will step into the role to lead Proven Winners' branding, marketing and advertising initiatives.



She is a lifer when it comes to marketing, spending her entire professional career in direct-to-consumer marketing. Shira has worked at PepsiCo, working on the brand and communications strategies for Quaker and Tropicana. More recently she served as vice president of brand marketing for meal delivery service Home Chef, where she oversaw growth plans and creative development.

"We are thrilled to welcome Shira to the leadership team at this pivotal point in the company's history," said Mark Broxon, Proven Winners CEO, in a press release on the topic. "We're confident Shira will take our marketing, advertising and overall brand value to the next level in the months and years to come."

"I'm excited to bring my expertise in brand building to such a well-respected category leader," Shira said in the same press release. "I look forward to partnering with our internal team and key stakeholders to take the brand to new heights."

Best of luck, Shira. And if you weren't a gardener before, you will be now!



... and the Second

The Plant Company, the licensed grower of Proven Winners leafjoy houseplants, has named EHR (formerly Eason Horticultural Resources) as its horticultural brokerage partner in North America. This agreement gives EHR the right to sell and distribute leafjoy to independent garden centers throughout its service network, creating a new route to market for the branded houseplant program.

Through EHR, IGCs can build assortments in 9-, 12- and 17-cm premium foliage, leafjoy littles, H2O hydroponic designs, Terraform terrariums, Canopy hanging baskets, and Boutique and Collector's Edition selections. Retailers can choose six ready-built trending bundles—Essentials, Traditional, Deco, Climb-itt, H2O Expanded and Glass Only—or customize an à la carte mix.



Plants arrive display-ready with variety-specific labels, care guidance, QR-linked consumer content and Proven Winners marketing support. Atrium, Cocoon, WorkLife and SpaScene collections organize plants around the spaces and conditions in which shoppers will use them, helping retail teams replace guesswork with confidence.

“EHR understands how independent garden centers buy and what it takes to turn a strong product line into a successful retail program,” said Dave Thorne, senior vice president of sales and marketing for The Plant Company. “Their sales team and transportation network can help retailers build and ship the right leafjoy mix for their markets while we deliver the innovation, quality and consistency behind the brand. This is an important step in taking leafjoy to its next level of growth.”

“We're thrilled to offer a program that provides independent garden centers such a distinctive collection of houseplants with a program that is easy to buy, merchandise and support,” said Chris Berg, director of marketing for EHR. “leafjoy brings together exclusive genetics, retail-ready presentation, consumer education and the power of Proven Winners. EHR adds the local relationships to make that program practical store by store, giving independents a stronger way to compete in houseplants.”

Independent garden centers interested in availability, booking and program options can contact their local EHR sales representative or visit [EHR's WEBSITE](#).

Quick on the heels of Cultivate is the [Perennial Plant Association's](#) Annual Symposium. And each year at this symposium is when PPA reveals its much-anticipated Perennial Plant of the Year. For 2027, that distinction goes to ...

[Vernonia Summer's Swan Song!](#)



Photo credit: Ed Lyon

As its variety name suggests, the Summer's Swan Song ironwood is at its best in later summer to fall, exploding with deep purple flowers that are magnets for butterflies and bees. Those blooms top reddish stems with feathery olive-green leaves. When it's done blooming, the fluffy pompoms stay on for winter interest.

While other native ironwoods can be more than 10 ft. tall, this variety stays just 36 in. by 40 in., making it a nice size for most gardens. Summer's Swan Song is a full-sun perennial for Zones 4-9, and tolerates a range of moisture levels and soil types. The foliage stays pristine throughout the season thanks to its excellent powdery mildew and rust resistance.



Photo credit: Richard Hawke

It is superb in a mass planting or as an item in a pollinator garden. Pair it with other medium-sized perennials such as asters, rudbeckias and little bluestems, or place it in front of Joe Pye weeds, sunflowers and switchgrasses.

I would consider displaying it alongside those complementary perennials as inspiration for your customers. Excellent choice for Perennial Plant of the Year, PPA!

Reassess Your Insurance Coverage

Speaking of renovating or revamping your retail greenhouse, I was reminded by a recent edition of the *SmartBrief on Small Business* newsletter that small businesses should reassess insurance coverage on a regular basis. This [ARTICLE](#) informs us that as much as 73% of small businesses are underinsured, and 14% don't even know what their policy covers.

Businesses evolve but the insurance coverage doesn't always keep pace with the growing number of employees, technology and property. Maybe you renovated your greenhouse and the task of reevaluating the insurance on it got kicked down the to-do list. I get it.

So go ahead, get your insurance agent on the horn this week. Maybe it's a bit slow for you this month. What better time to check the insurance reassessment task off your list?

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, etc., drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor-at-Large
Green Profit

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