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*News and commentary for the nursery & landscape market*

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2018

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# Nursery & LANDSCAPE INSIDER

News and Commentary for the landscape and nursery market

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Stihl Cordless Shrub Shears  
Intelligent Spray System  
Kiss My Aster  
Duluth Work Pants  
Chia Pets go Rogue  
Pesticide CEUs  
Plants—Duh  
Notes from the Edge of Sanity



## When the Weather Outside is Frightful—Buy Stuff

Well, ladies and gents, we've nearly made it through another calendar year. But before we turn the page, we have to get through the season of giving oftentimes useless gifts for the sake of making ourselves feel a little less of a cheapskate. And if you're like me, you haven't even started shopping yet and have a tinge of guilt associated with giving gift cards every year. So I asked my students and colleagues to send me gift ideas. While a fair number involved elves in NC-17 poses, there were a number of clever ideas suitable for an upstanding publication such as this:





Fear not! No elves were harmed—only detained (except by the Lego fight club) in the construction of this newsletter.

## Stihl HSA 25 Cordless Shears

I've always had a soft spot for Stihl because they're headquartered in my old stomping grounds (Virginia Beach, Virginia) and Roger Phelps is a huge supporter of student-industry interaction and experiential learning. But Stihl also makes some darn good products and their **cordless shrub shears** are no different.

Lightweight and yet capable of about two hours of use on a charge, they also provide a much cleaner cut compared to some other cordless models I've tried.



Just keep in mind that these aren't designed to be pruning 100-ft. long hedges. This product's wheelhouse is in formal topiaries or espaliers where more precision is needed in cuts. In that use, I doubt you'd be disappointed in this toy.



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## Intelligent Spray Control System Kit

This one is definitely geared toward the nursery producer, and it isn't cheap, but wow, what a marvel of engineering and about 10 years of diligent work by USDA and university faculty. I've mentioned this in previous editions of the newsletter, yet the **Intelligent Spray System** warrants more press because it's a money-saving marvel.





Not much to it, but what it lacks in size it makes up for in smarts.

It works pretty simply. Sensors determine if the sprayer passes by a plant canopy and only sprays when there's something to spray. It also can determine the density of the canopy and only spray with enough force (and product) to penetrate the canopy.

The result is up to an 85% reduction in chemical cost. So even though you're looking at around a \$30,000 initial investment, the return on investment is so substantial it pays for itself quickly. And it comes as a retrofit package, so you just do a little redneck engineering on your end to install it on your sprayer and poof—you're in business. If you get a new sprayer, no problem, you can take it off the old sprayer and install it on the new one.

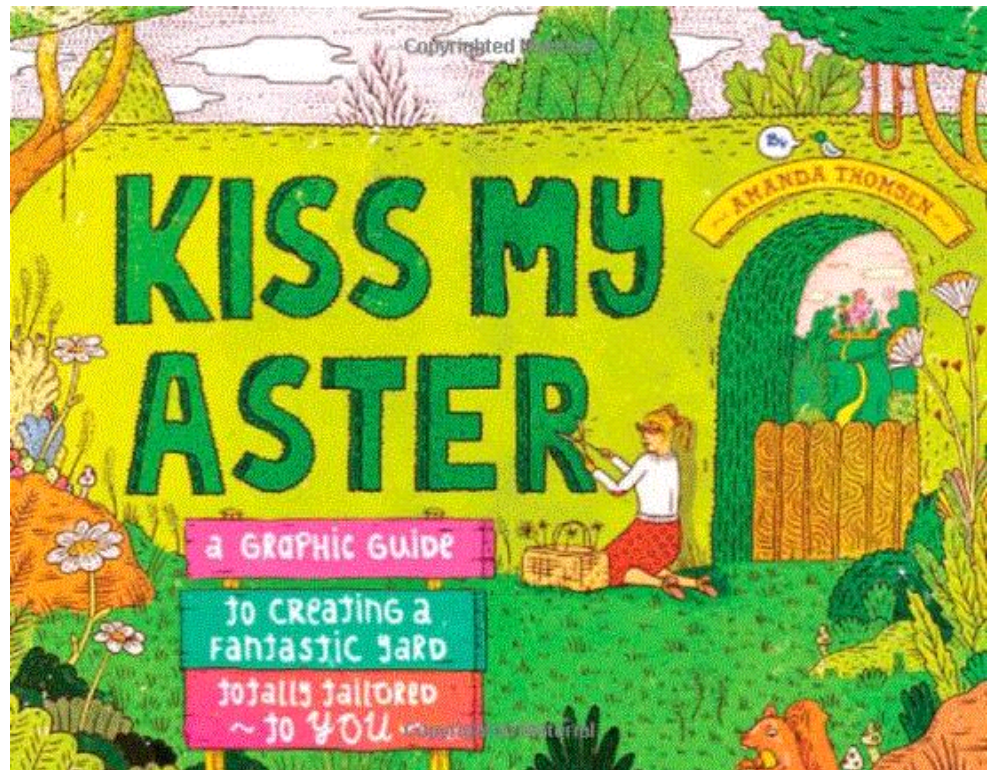


## Kiss My Aster (And Bless Her Heart ...)

You may have heard of Amanda Thomsen because she's a frequent contributor to *Green Profit*. And if you've read anything she writes, you probably haven't forgotten it either.

Amanda wrote a short, sweet and very funny book back in 2012 that's still atop my sarcastic garden bestseller list. Better still, [you can grab it off of Amazon for under \\$10](#).

"Kiss My Aster: A Graphic Guide to Creating a Fantastic Yard Totally Tailored to You" is absolutely perfect for you landscape contractors to gift your clients with. Especially those really wishy-washy clients who, when you try to keep up with their requests from visit to visit, you would swear they suffer from multiple garden personality disorder.



I must admit though ... I fall into this category, too. All gardeners do eventually!



## Duluth Ultimate Fire Hose Cargo Work Pants

We've all seen those wonderful commercials ([and if you haven't, stop and watch this](#)) from [Duluth Trading Co.](#) with the cartoon dude pole dancing or fighting a giant angry beaver. Well, I wondered if these pants were really so amazing or if the angry beaver really would win that fight, so I decided to ask a few folks who swear by Duluth clothing products and each of the three guys I asked all said they only purchase Duluth pants now and that, yes indeed, they do live up to the commercial hype.

Apparently, the secret is that the fabric is primarily canvas, but it also has a bit of spandex woven in. So I suppose, in some way, it means this qualifies as yoga pants for dudes (although they do make ladies clothing as well). Let that visual sink in a bit ... and the hair on your neck may stand up. Thank goodness Duluth only incorporates 2% spandex!

Maybe someone will get me some of these for Christmas and I can try them out—or you can get some and report back on them. I don't have a personal review now because I hardly ever wear



long pants unless I'm attending a wedding, funeral or meeting with my dean (the big boss) at the University of Georgia. In fact, my students actually keep a running count of the days I wear long pants and I managed to hit seven in calendar year 2018! Sorry, you kids in North Dakota—I'm not trying to rub it in.



## Chia Pets Go Rogue

It's no secret that the Chia Pet has been one of the best-selling "garden gifts" for decades. So simple, yet completely hilarious, you can get Chia Pets with iconic resemblances from Mr. T to Bob Ross. And with those two guys, the hair was legit. But I was scrolling around the Internet of things last night and found one caricature that made me literally cry I laughed so hard.

That's right, folks—new for 2018 you can get the President Donald Trump Chia Pet. Now I'm about as independent a political guy as there is, so don't take this the wrong way ... but this is definitely one that needs a change in seed source to more of a creeping bentgrass for the comb-over effect, if you ask me.



But there's also another new one, which is perfect: [Sophia of "The Golden Girls"](#) may just adorn the dashboard of my truck soon. Such a classy character and actress!

## Pesticide Applicator License Credits

What better gift for the forgetful and/or procrastinator than that of [online Pesticide Certification Credits](#) for those who just had a giant "oh crap" moment when their state sent an email saying their license is about to expire. In full disclosure—this has happened to me ... twice.

While not available in all states, 14 U.S. states accept online credits from on-demand courses. So if you're in California, Delaware, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, West (by God) Virginia or Wyoming, you're in luck. You can keep your certification going by taking courses in your undies at home while sipping on some 90-proof egg nog!

## Plants—Duh?!

There are a lot of agricultural economists out there that confidently state the fastest growing plant purchasing avenue is [the Internet of things](#). And, in fact, there are dozens of nurseries now selling direct to consumers. So why not send a plant?

Historically, when I think of mail-order gardening, I remember the niche producer who may be mailing out hosta or daylilies. (I worked for one such producer way back in the early 1990s.) But the Internet, shipping logistics and inventory management software that producers now have at their disposal has made monumental leaps in the last few years. As a result, you're seeing producers like [Monrovia](#), [Wayside Gardens](#), [Plant Delights Nursery](#) (a pioneer in online sales), [Forest Farm](#), etc. realizing more and more sales attributed to online presence. This isn't slowing down anytime soon, folks!



Why is it we always want what we can't grow? Well, pesky heat tolerance won't dissuade me from trying golden larch over and over again. You know that rule about trying and failing repeatedly and it somehow indicating you're insane? I don't buy into that at all.

Now, if only someone who loves me would order me a golden larch (*Pseudolarix amabilis*) to follow in the footsteps of the four I've killed thusfar (in all fairness, it's a Zone 4 to 7 tree and I'm square in Zone 8). But I want that texture, fall color, uniqueness ... I want it bad!

## Our Wacky Wonderful World—Notes from the Edge of Sanity

On Wednesday (December 12), a miraculous thing occurred in Washington, D.C. that didn't make many waves in the national press, probably because it didn't involve sex, lies or videotape. But for us in agriculture (including landscape contractors and producers), it was an important achievement that signified a rare bipartisan achievement.

So what happened, already? The 2018 Farm Bill was passed by both chambers and now sits on the President's desk for approval. A lot of appreciation should be bestowed upon our state and national associations who pushed hard in the background for this needed legislation.

It's not easy to digest exactly what's contained in the bill or how it will impact our industries in the long term. But several points are noteworthy:

- It includes enhanced funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI), allowing all specialty crops to compete for the full \$80 million annually for the SCRI program.
- Full \$9 million annual funding of the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program was included that fosters a reduction of bureaucratic impediments to make the program more efficient in overcoming trade barriers.
- It maintained funding for programs that combat invasive pests and diseases at \$75 million annually, with the goal of enhancing its funding in five years by \$7.5 million to fund the National Clean Plant Network.
- It maintained funding for the Specialty Crop Block Grants (SCBG) Program, which allows individual state Departments of Agriculture to fund important local research.
- It created a new research program focusing on mechanization as a means of offsetting increasing labor issues in agriculture.

Until next time, I hope each of you have a fantbulous Christmahanakwanzika!

And if you really want to give a gift that makes you feel like a million bucks, help out a fellow horticulturist in need.

Live authentic,



Matthew Chappell  
Editor-at-Large  
Nursery & Landscape Insider

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