

IGC & IHIS both at McCormick, plus new-to-you plants and products for spring!



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## Green Profit's **buzz!**

*Retail news from inside and outside the green industry*

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## IGC & IHIS Co-Locate in Chicago

Big news! You can kill two birds with one stone in Chicago this August now that the Independent Garden Center Show (IGC) has entered an agreement with the National Hardware Show to introduce and hold the newly created Independent Home Improvement Show (IHIS) together this year.

The brand-new IHIS will be a separate and dedicated show floor held alongside the IGC Show at the Lakeside | McCormick space. The IHIS will have all sorts of categories that pair nicely with garden retail products, such as tools, hardware, homeware, barbecue/grilling and all those awesome things homeowners love to add to their domiciles.

Again, these are separate shows, but will be located next to one another to facilitate attendee traffic. The hardware show attendees often buy home and garden products, and you garden retailers benefit from tools and BBQ products, too. It's a win-win. "Our attendees have full access of the IHIS section (with IGC badges) and all that it has to offer," wrote Jeff Morey, the IGC Show's co-founder, in an email to me this morning. In the press release announcing the event, Jeff said hardware and garden retailers are basically cousins and have mutual experiences, concerns and goals. "Each is positioned to benefit from the other's unique experiences and perspectives as independent retailers. This key alliance further expands the networking opportunities at the IGC Show, so that garden centers and hardware stores can together celebrate the successes of independent retailing and share strategies to surmount today's toughest challenges."

To learn more about what the Independent Home Improvement Show is all about, go to [www.nationalhardwareshow.com/IHIS/](http://www.nationalhardwareshow.com/IHIS/). To register for the August 13-15 IGC Show in Chicago, go to [www.igcshow.com](http://www.igcshow.com). And go tell your local hardware store owners how much fun you have at the show and free classic rock concert each year.



## A Few Green Thumb Awards

Meteorological spring is March 1, and you've been in the biz long enough to know that home gardeners are champing at the bit to get outside. And if they can't get outside due to the icicles and snow drifts and generally not great gardening weather in most of the country, then they are reading up on the latest and greatest garden products to hit the market.

What are they reading about? Well, they might be learning about the latest plant winners from the Direct Gardening Association's 2019 Green Thumb Awards. Those plants include:

**Illuminati Tiny Tower Mock Orange** from Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs, winner in the Ornamental Plants, Bulbs and Seeds category. Tiny Tower is different from other mock oranges in that when not in bloom, its green foliage is held in a "stacked" manner; i.e. it looks like a tower of deep green leaves. In early summer, it has hundreds of white flowers layered between the foliage. It's a small form of mock orange, so it can fit in most available garden spaces, and is also resistant to many pests and diseases, as well as deer.



**Peppy Le Pom Ornamental Pomegranate**, also a Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs winner in the Ornamental Plants, Bulbs and Seeds category. Peppy Le Pom is a dwarf variety that can be brought inside and used as an indoor plant in colder climates, giving northern gardeners a chance at finally growing pomegranates. Flowers are orange in color and bloom all summer, developing into small, round fruits that give Peppy Le Pom an additional attractiveness.





In the Edible Plants category, the **Wood Prairie Organic Colossal Potato Collection** from Wood Prairie Family Farm won one of the two awards. The potato collection is a “super-sized” seed potato assortment containing 19 organic potato varieties. The collection includes early-season varieties (Yukon Gold, Reddale, Prairie Blush, Red Cloud, Caribe and Dark Red Norland), mid-season varieties (Adirondack Blue, Adirondack Red, Huckleberry Gold, King Harry and Rose Gold), late-season varieties (Butte Russet, Yukon Gem, Elba, All Blue, Carola and Island Sunshine) and two fingerling varieties (Russian Banana and Rose Finn Apple). All are traditionally bred and non-GMO, plus are bred to perform well under organic growing conditions.



The second Edible Plants winner is **Tomato Purple Boy Hybrid** from Park Seed. It combines the flavor of the well-known Cherokee Purple heirloom with the improved disease resistance of a hybrid. This variety is resistant to nematodes, verticillium wilt, fusarium wilt and tobacco mosaic virus. Harvests in 80 days from transplants.



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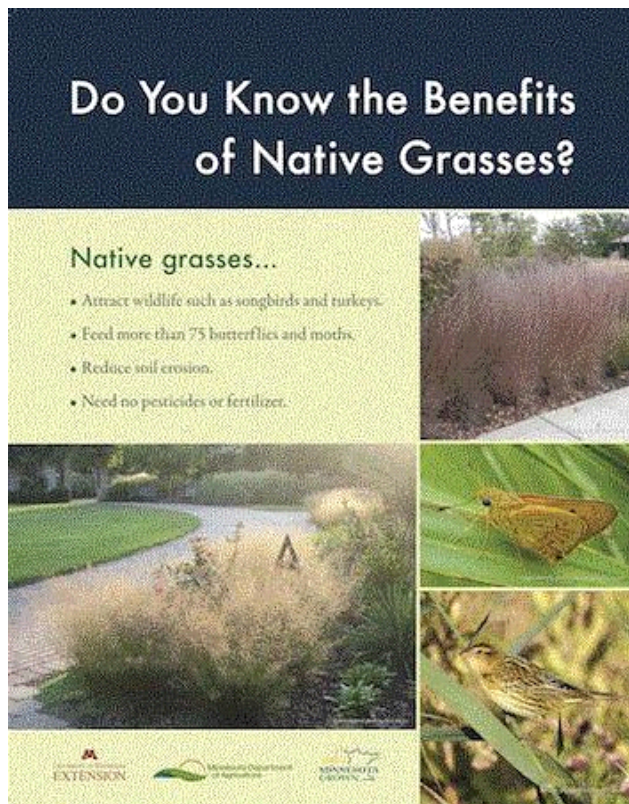
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## Who Doesn't Love Grasses?

*I love ornamental grasses. With so much garden drama with such little care and maintenance, what could be better? Consumers are catching on to those and other benefits, too. Here's what Paul Pilon wrote about native grasses and garden centers in a recent edition of another great Ball Publishing e-newsletter, [Perennial Pulse](#).*

Native grasses have become increasingly popular, however, many garden centers have a difficult time selling them in the spring without showy flowers. The University of Minnesota, thanks to grants from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Specialty Crop program, has developed marketing materials to help retailers sell more grasses.





Point-of-purchase posters, such as the one above, can effectively inform customers of what they're buying, how grasses benefit butterflies and the environment, and tells them how easy they are to grow.

Speaking of butterflies, did you know that native grasses support over 30 species of *Lepidoptera* as host plants for their small and often unnoticed caterpillars? The University of Minnesota, in conjunction with MasterTag, has also developed informative stick and hang tags. Click [here](#) to learn more about this signage and these plant labels.

The University of Minnesota has compiled a number of publications developed to increase consumer awareness of the benefits of native grasses. Some of the titles I encourage you to check out are:

- "Gardening with Native Grasses in Cold Climates"
- "Grasses: 30 Special Features and Uses"
- The "Native Grasses Benefit Butterflies and Moths" handout
- "Using Native Grasses in the Landscape"

Click [here](#) to download these publications and several other valuable resources.



## Moms Love Shoes

I'm a sucker for practical shoes. And for an avid gardener like me, practical shoes mean I'm always in the market for good boots.

I got a press release recently about Western Chief and Chooka garden clogs and rain boots. They

have a ton of women's styles available for Mother's Day sales. Like these Western Chief garden clogs:



And these rain boots from Chooka:



Both are easy to slip on and keep your feet protected and dry. Bonus, they are easy to clean. They look like substantial shoes, too, unless you have an accident with a super-sharp spade, I would imagine—then you'd have other things to worry about than the integrity of your shoes.

You can check out the available styles for the [CLOGS](#) and the [RAIN BOOTS](#) at these retail sites, but you can contact [Danielle Duncan](#) for wholesale orders at 800-925-7463. Oh, Mother's Day is May 12. Get your orders in!



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## Speaking of Spring Holidays ...

Easter is April 21 this year. You still have some time to order the following cute-as-a-button items I spotted from Coastal Nursery at TPIE:









I've seen plastic eggs and such decorating outdoor trees for a couple of decades now, but this is cool! I specifically like the Easter baskets. Why? Kids don't need as many sweets as they get (or would like), so this helps fill the basket with a minimum addition of sugary treats. Granted, I am not a mother and have no idea if that would even fly with children. But still, it's cute!

Coastal Nursery's Eddie Yarberry told me that one retailer has ordered the decorated egg tree

(not sure if it's the one in the clear bag or the bagless one) with the addition of lights.

You may recall that Coastal Nursery also produces the bagged Christmas tree that comes with decorations and lights. Is Halloween next? I neglected to ask!

## Trying a New Sort of “Spinach”

I try to find one new-to-me crop for my vegetable garden each year. Thanks to AgriStarts' Ty Strode, whom I also spotted at TPIE, I'm planning on planting a new type of “spinach.” Ty's been working on new and unusual crops for some time, and he's got two that I think are pretty cool. Okinawa spinach and Longevity spinach aren't true spinaches at all, but are in the *Gynura* genus: *crepioides* for the Okinawa and *procumbens* for the Longevity. Native to Indonesia, these greens have edible leaves and shoots and a mild spinach flavor. The Okinawa even have purplish color under its leaves, making it quite pretty, too. Eat raw or lightly cooked, just like spinach!



Okinawa "Spinach"





Longevity "Spinach"

What I'm hoping is that I get a great "spinach" crop without attracting those pesky leafminers. What do you think my chances are for tunnel-free leaves? If I'm looking for a new-to-me veg crop, I'm sure others are, as well. [Reach out to Ty](#) and see what he has for you.

## Final Call

Just a reminder that the *Green Profit*/RBI Young Retailer Award deadline is March 1—that's Friday! That'll be the last day for you to submit the name of your favorite 35-and-under garden retailer and lay out the reasons why she or he (or you!) deserves to take home this year's award.

Once we gather all the submissions, our staff will determine which three young folks will be our finalists. From there, they'll be required to write an essay on a still-to-be-determined pressing industry concern, then will be judged by our illustrious panel of retail experts. It all culminates with them traveling to Cultivate'19 in Columbus, Ohio—on our dime—to walk the show, dine with special retailer and grower heavyweights and find out who wins.

We created a quick-and-easy nomination form at [www.greenprofit.com/youngretailer](http://www.greenprofit.com/youngretailer). The *GrowerTalks*/Nexus Young Grower Award is also happening, and if you have an outstanding grower in mind, submit their information at [www.growertalks.com/younggrower](http://www.growertalks.com/younggrower). Good luck!

## Oscar Snaps

Remember last week when I mentioned that the National Garden Bureau's Annual Flower of 2019 would feature the snapdragon? Chris Selin of Bailey Nurseries wrote in to say that snapdragons were "all over" this past weekend's Oscar red carpet coverage. Not an award show watcher myself, I couldn't find any evidence from YouTube footage, nor did Chris think to "snap" a photo of



live TV coverage. "It was a win for the National Garden Bureau, though," Chris said.



I mentioned the presence of snapdragons to NGB executive director Diane Blazek. Diane hunted down visual proof of the snaps! Giant vases behind the E! Red Carpet Show location were jam-packed with snapdragons in various shades of red, orange, peach and coral. Quite nice!

Comments? Questions? Let me have 'em at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

Ellen Wells  
Editor-at-Large  
Green Profit

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