

Echinacea, Farwest, Sausage Vine, Tree Ivy, Trade—Yowzas!




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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Echinacea Sombrero Baja Burgundy
Here Comes FarWest
Sausage Vine
PPA Awards
China Blocks Agricultural Imports
The Trade Spat Deepens
Tree Ivy

Sweet starlight
Hydrangea paniculata
'Pan1782hydr' PPAF

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Sombrero Baja Burgundy Wins AAS Award

Three years ago, **All-America Selections** made an excellent strategic decision to begin the process of evaluating perennials, in addition to annuals. Cultivars were to be trialed across North America, with results tracked over three years. After the third year of trials, data was (is) used to make a decision on which cultivar(s) met the criteria for recognition as All-America Selections. Well, after three years of trialing a number of perennials, the inaugural winner is Darwin Perennials' Echinacea Sombrero Baja Burgundy.



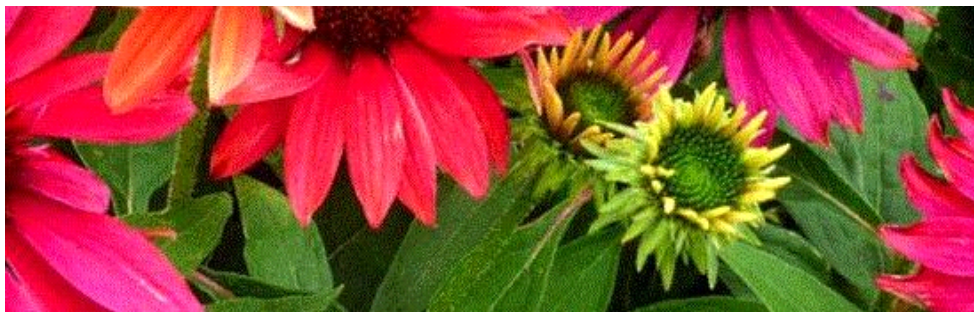


Photo courtesy of Darwin Perennials.

First, I will chime in and agree that after seeing this cultivar in a number of environments over the course of several years, it certainly deserves the award (in fact, the Sombrero Baja series as a whole rocks). Sombrero Baja Burgundy is notable for its sturdy, compact habit, long bloom period (that attracts all sorts of pollinators) and tolerance of powdery mildew (especially in the eastern U.S.).

It's hardy in Zones 4 to 10(11) and AAS judges gave it high marks for overwintering during three tough winters in the great cold north. Greenhouse growers appreciate how well it bulks up for spring sales with no vernalization needed. Home gardeners love the attractive color and landscape performance that they can enjoy for many years.

I can't wait to see upcoming winners, but AAS certainly got the first perennial winner spot-on.



Here Comes FarWest

With school starting for my two spawn and my formal teaching getting underway at the University of Georgia in the first half of August, **FarWest** always seems to sneak up on me. Maybe this wouldn't happen if school didn't start until September—but don't get me started on that rant ...



Dr. Charlie Hall (Texas A&M University) will provide the keynote address at FarWest this year.

Anyhow, as usual, FarWest is offering a **multitude of interesting educational opportunities**, including a keynote from Dr. Charlie Hall (Texas A&M University/AmericanHort) discussing economic indicators. Then there are seminars from Dr. Mike Dirr on small trees for urban environments, Kelly Vance on IPM/biocontrol systems, Sarah Braun on bioplastic use in the industry, Keith Warren on trees for urban forests, and Lloyd Traven on bringing new cultivars/genetics to market (and the list goes on). My point is that there are a lot of big-name speakers on the docket to go with an excellent tradeshow, and for your money, it has a lot of bang.



If only I could go. Wait! Anyone want to teach a week of junior-level Nursery Management so I can? Yeah, I thought not ...

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Sausage Vine

What a name, folks! The real nomenclature is *Stauntonia hexaphylla* and, no, it isn't named after Staunton, Virginia, either. It's actually native to coastal eastern Asia and those sausage-like fruit are sometimes used in dessert dishes in Japan. But in a landscape, if you prefer no fruit, it's a dioecious species, so you can have your wish. I first encountered it in North Carolina at Daniel Stowe Botanic Gardens, but have since seen it in several botanic gardens across the gulf coast and in California.



While not uber showy, the flowers of sausage vine are quite fragrant.

In a world with so few vines, yet decent demand for them, I'm always looking for under-utilized taxa. Sausage vine fits that mold, as it's a winding climber (no tendrils like cucurbits) that's hardy from Zone 7a to 10.

It's semi-evergreen to deciduous (in cold winters) when grown in Zone 7a and yet evergreen when you get down to Zones 8b to 10. Flowers are white and fragrant, appearing in late February (south) to early April (north), and persist for a few weeks. The real appeal of this plant is that it's a vine that's manageable, therefore very well suited for pergolas and such. It's also quite unusual, which means it's not easy to find. But if you do, grab one. If nothing else, you can chase your special someone around the yard ... with a sausage.

Perennial Plant Association Awards Announced

Based upon what I've seen on social media and heard from friends who attended, the Perennial Plant Association Symposium, held in Chicago last week, was a huge hit! As I love to recognize those individuals who excel in our field, I think it's appropriate to recognize some of the PPA 2019 award winners. They include:

The most prominent award was given to Anna Ball, who was presented with the Award of Merit, which recognizes not only an amazing career, but also a career highlighted by sustained and impactful support of our industry.



Anna Ball accepting the PPA Award of Merit and providing the audience with a few words of wisdom.

Next up, the Academic Award is given each year to recognize a PPA member who provides exceptional leadership in education to our industry. This year's award recipient was Dr. Jared Barnes from Stephen F. Austin State University. As a fellow educator, I can attest that Jared is doing great things, and thankfully, maintaining SFAU's reputation as an outstanding horticulture program.

Finally, the Young Professional Award is given to a PPA member to recognize and honor, and to encourage participation, achievement and growth of, an individual in the industry who's a talented and diligent newcomer. This year's winner was Katharina Kreß Wallace, who's been a fixture at Hoffman Nursery and avid supporter of new professionals via [Emergent](#) and [Women in Horticulture](#).

Congrats to all the PPA winners!



China Blocks Agricultural Imports

Until now, ornamental crops have been shielded from the "trade war," as our industry is miniscule compared to the billions in wheat, soybeans, corn, etc. that flow from the U.S. to China. Even some specialty crops like pecans and hazelnuts have been impacted, mainly because their export value to China is so high compared to nursery crops. But two days ago, in response to new U.S. tariffs, China halted all agricultural imports from the U.S.

This move has resulted in a number of growers calling or texting me and asking, "What does this mean for us?" I'm not sure at this point anyone has a great answer for that question. Upon searching academic and USDA resources for good numbers/figures to depict the value of ornamental crops exported to China, I came up with a big fat goose egg—I couldn't find numbers anywhere. Again, likely because they're so insignificant.

So my best answer for you when it comes to the effect of China's action to block all U.S. agricultural imports is it likely won't mean much to the vast majority of growers in the U.S.



Yet the Trade Spat Deepens

Upon talking with a colleague at the University of Georgia (Dr. Ben Campbell), it quickly became apparent that the real issue at hand is the tariffs placed on Chinese goods that are in place or set to go into effect September 1, 2019.

Essentially, get ready for input costs to increase 10% to 25% as the latest tariffs are initiated (unless one side backs down before September 1). When you take a look at proposed tariffs (["List 4" at this site](#); note [lists 1-3 are already implemented](#)), some items that I immediately notice are bulbs/tubers/corms, unrooted cuttings and slips of live plants, other live plants (including tissue culture—that's a biggie), and cut flowers/foilage. Then there are the chemicals that are used in the manufacture of containers and other hardgoods. This doesn't even touch on items that landscape contractors rely on daily, like mowers.

So what's the bottom line? Essentially, producers should get ready for a sizable increase in input costs. Growers also need to decide if they'll eat the cost increases or pass them (partially or in full) to consumers. That means plant material costs (in addition to some equipment/hardgood costs) are likely to rise for contractors. The question is this: how will price increases affect demand of products and services? That's a question that there currently is not a good answer for.

An advertisement for Petite Knock Out plants. On the left is a photograph of a large, bushy plant with green leaves and many small red flowers. A green banner in the top left of the photo says 'the knock out family of roses'. To the right of the photo, the text reads 'Get a low-maintenance landscape.' in green, followed by 'Petite Knock Out®' in pink. Below this is a green button that says 'ORDER NOW'. To the right of the button is small text: 'Melbenbino' PP 30,811 U.S. Pat. No. 11,252,928 CPBR 6,553'. On the far right is a photograph of a potted plant with red flowers, with a pink circular sticker on the pot that says 'Meet Petite!'.

the knock out family of roses

Get a low-maintenance landscape.

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Meet Petite!

Tree Ivy

How dare I write about an ivy! But while related to *Hedera helix*, it isn't *that* ivy people, so chill. *Dendropanax trifidus* (tree ivy) is another one of those species that makes me scratch my noggin and ask, "Why don't more people grow it?" Well, it's only hardy in Zones 7 to 10, but it's not the plant's fault you decided to live in Zone 4 (remember—you can grow *Echinacea Sombbrero Baja Burgundy*).



Mature size tree ivy, which makes a nice small tree.

I first saw the species in Aiken, South Carolina (likely planted by Bob McCartney of Woodlander's Nursery), growing in an urban planting and was immediately drawn to it due to the deep emerald green foliage. Tree ivy does, after about a decade, form a very nice evergreen tree about 10 to 15 ft. in height and 10 ft. in width. In my opinion, it looks best when the skirt (canopy) is raised 4 to 6 ft. from ground level, which gives the option of placing perennials under it.

Flowers are interesting in that they're terminal umbels, but alas, they aren't very showy. Much like the sausage vine mentioned above, it's difficult to find in North America (but easy to find in Europe), so if you spot one, I suggest grabbing it.

Our Wacky Wonderful World—Notes from the Edge of Sanity

In the wake of all the tragedy over the last week with mass-casualty shootings, my first thought (like so many of you) focused on understanding why this happens. People debate that there are a number of reasons, from mental illness to a breakdown of family structure to video games. I have no desire to get into that debate, so I wondered how we as an industry could help prevent these tragedies.

One thing is for sure: research has shown again and again (since the study of psychology began) that people who regularly have the experience creating and acting as a caretaker are less likely to express violent behavior. Also, those who participate in group activities are less prone to violence.

How does this relate to horticulture? Well, back in the dark ages of the 1980s and '90s, there was a push to promote a field of study called horticulture therapy. At one point, a large number of Land-Grant Universities actually offered degree programs in horticulture therapy, of which one component was improvement of mental health via gardening. As of today, there remain **only eight university programs still offering horticulture therapy degree options**. That's pretty sad.

However, the horticulture therapy movement transitioned into a community gardening movement that continues today. It's a great avenue for people of all ages to check the boxes of creating something, being a caretaker and being part of a group. But it's not just community gardens that achieve this goal; it's Master Gardener associations, 4-H clubs, FFA associations, garden clubs, etc.

So if you want to use your talents to combat violence, maybe an easy way would be to support gardening activities in your community. You may even mold a future horticulturist in the process.

Live authentic,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Chappell'.

Matthew Chappell
Editor-at-Large
Nursery & Landscape Insider

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