

Palm pest, size matters and greening dorms and classrooms



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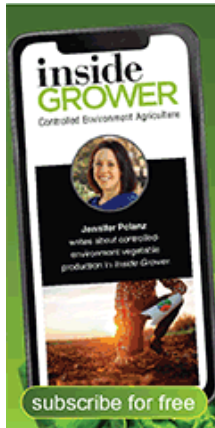
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# TROPICAL TOPICS

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Palm Pest  
Big or Small  
The Most Wonderful Time  
Finally ...



Ball Culture Guide

THE  
ENCYCLOPEDIA  
OF SEED  
GERMINATION

By JIM NAU

## Palm Pest

If you get my *Buzz* e-newsletter, you know that last week, the CBS Evening News turned me onto [THIS STORY](#) of woman whose neighbor complained about her yard (get the tissues out, folks). This week, the same news program informed me about lethal bronzing of palms in Florida. I don't mean spray tanning, either. I mean a disease—and not a new one—that is turning Florida's iconic palms into crispy dead poles in the ground. (You can read an article about it [HERE](#).)







Photo grabbed from the *Daytona Beach News-Journal Online*.

This lethal bronzing breakout, which started about 10-plus years ago, is caused by a bacteria that is transmitted by *Haplaxius crudus*, aka the American palm cixiid, one of many species of treehoppers. Once a tree is infected, it takes about six months for the tree to eventually die. One theory about how the disease spread to Florida from its place of origin in Mexico is that coursing through the bodies of Mexican treehoppers, it was helped along via the winds of Hurricane Wilma back in 2005. Then *H. crudus* became the vector here.

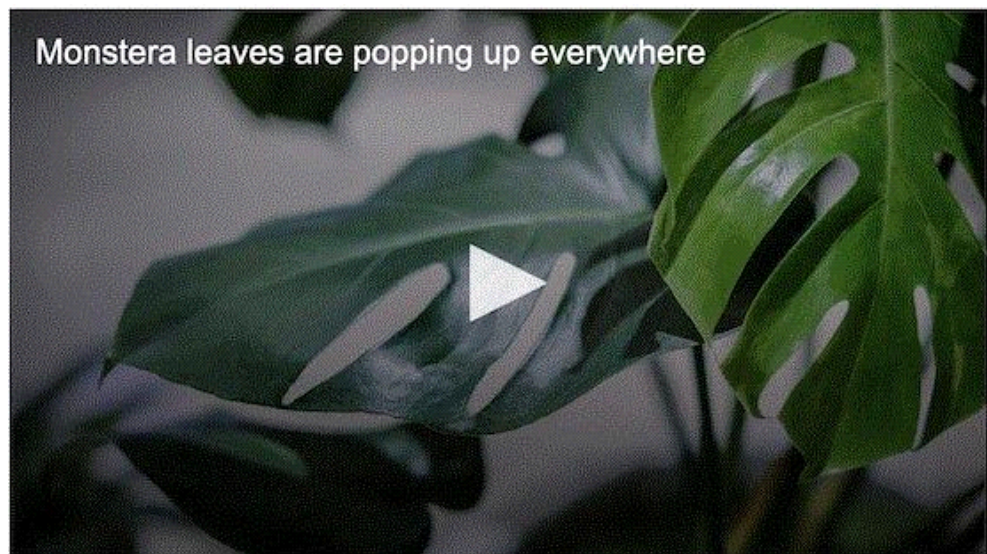
“Getting this disease under control is essential because it has the potential to drastically modify our landscape,” said UF entomologist Brian Bahder, who is studying the disease. The article referenced above says there is a preventative injection for palms that costs about \$50 a pop and needs to be reapplied every three months or so. So at the moment, only high-end resorts are going to that expense. I did find an [ARTICLE](#) on the website of UF’s Emerging Pathogens Institute from mid-July that says that lethal bronzing has now spread to an additional four species (totaling 16) and has now been found in eight new counties.

How do Florida’s tree nurseries feel about lethal bronzing and its impact on both the crop and their businesses? Good question! If you happen to be one of those nursery owners, jot me a note about it [HERE](#) (you can be anonymous, if you’d like). I also have an email into Brian Bahder to see if there are any updates/progress/status reports that industry folks—both growers and retailers—would benefit from. Stay tuned!



## Big or Small

According to floral expert J Schwanke, monstera is still trending like gangbusters. Here he is on a local Michigan news program showing viewers how to use the monstrous leaves of monstera in applications ranging from chargers to vases (the TV news dude totally thought J meant a phone charger, not a charger plate).



But if you were to look on Instagram and search the different hashtags (like #plantparenthood, for example), among all the shots of these Swiss cheese plants, you’d find an increasing number of

images featuring miniature potted houseplants. No kidding, like thumbnail tiny! And in the tiniest pots imaginable. From flowers to foliage and succulents to cacti, small is the next big thing.





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Monstera Adansonii?! 😊 Happy  
#monsteramondays ... more





My theory is these non-professional plant collectors are taking their collections to the bank and trying to make some cash. Small plants? They're just big enough to grow en masse in a sunny window with a relatively quick turnaround time. Order some small pots for a cheap price, pot up and put on Etsy.

Also noticed on Instagram, memes that poke fun at inadvertently killing houseplants. One of the oldest excuses we've heard for people not wanting indoor plants is the fact that they don't want them to die. From the memes, I'm guessing younger folks are okay with that and understand there are more for them to buy.



## The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

No, not the one with Santa and snow and wrapping paper. It's the one with book bags and pencils and Trapper Keepers (am I dating myself?). It's back-to-school time, and whether it's off to college or off to half-day kindergarten, houseplants and the beginning of school have become closely linked over the last several years.

Last week, I received a press release that, by its subject line, could have been mistaken as a college plant promotion: "Tips on Greening a College Dorm." Turns out the email was instead



promoting environmentally friendly cleaning products.

But what about actual green-colored things like plants for dorms and classrooms? Well, 24 hours after I received that aforementioned email, I received a promo blast from Armstrong Garden Centers that was a *little* more helpful along that line: “Grow A Houseplant Haven.” In that e-blast, Armstrong included information on creating an “indoor oasis” with monstera and bromeliads; how to “clean” the air with sansevierias and spider plants; a [LINK](#) to a DIY clean-air container garden; and general information on super houseplants to have in your house.

Gen Zers—the people who are spanning pre-K to college at the moment—are ripe for houseplant promotion specific to them (or their parents), don't you think? The Collegiate Plant Initiative is knee-deep in promoting houseplants among co-eds via [Plant Drops](#). And, even though I haven't actually looked yet, I bet I could find Pinterest boards promoting plants as teacher gifts this school year. We can do better! And with National Indoor Plant Week quickly approaching (the third week in September), now's the time to start planting (or potting) the houseplant idea into consumers' minds.



## Finally ...

I have a quick update from the last *Tropical Topics* e-newsletter in which I was drumming up some ideas and encouraging folks to start National Indoor Plant Week (NIPW) promos for the third week of September. I mentioned Leslie Halleck will be doing some giveaways of her two books (signed copies!) that week. Here's an email I received from Leslie this morning:

“Thanks for including me in your e-newsletter. Steve's Leaves immediately emailed me and said he'd sponsor my giveaways with plants!”

Leslie will post a video the second week in September that will be of her unboxing some of Steve's Leaves' plants, and in which she'll promote her book and plant giveaways. She'll do one giveaway a day for five days (Monday-Friday), each bestowing on the winner a copy of each book and a plant from Steve's Leaves.



This is how it's done, my friends! Teamwork! Partnering with allies and people with the same goals to spread the word about the wonders of plants. In this case, it's Leslie and Steve. Who else is ready to partner up? Tell you what, if you don't know who to partner with, I'll do the matchmaking. Drop me a **NOTE** about what you have, and as long as two of you write in, I'll pair you with some folks who also want to get involved with NIPW.

Suggestions, comments, questions or news to share? Just drop me a line at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

*Ellen*

**Ellen Wells**  
Editor-at-Large  
**Green Profit**

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