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Shipping Foliage

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There are commonly known issues within horticulture that we trade editor types don't really know about, but the ones elbow-deep in the biz know about all too well. One of those topics is how difficult it is to ship foliage out of Florida for garden centers. From what I understand, if a customer doesn't require enough volume to fill a truck they have to arrange their own shipping, whose cost is essentially unknown until the weight, sleeving and packing options are finalized. In the busy part of the season, taking the time to pick and choose and estimate then finalize ... well, it's all too much on top of everything else going on.

It's enough of a headache for garden centers north of Florida to not want to order foliage. That's not really an option now, is it?

Heart of Florida Greenhouses in Zolfo Springs, Florida, has a mind to change that. I spoke to them at Cultivate to learn about their shipping options via FedEx Priority. The boxes are max 40 in. tall (so no plant material over that height), 40 in. wide and 48 in. deep. Salesman Austin Bryant tells me they never, ever ship over a weekend, either, meaning less waste coming your way. It's a great way for smaller IGCs and florists to better manage their inventory, allowing them to place smaller orders more often and adjust the assortment considering demand while keeping shipping costs low. Great idea, huh? The Garden Center Group thought so, too, and gave them a TPIE 2017 Cool Product Award.

Does this seem like an option for your foliage nursery? Would you like to weigh in on why this shipping practice seems particular to Florida foliage? Any sides of the issue I'm not seeing and I need to know about? Drop me a line at ewells@ballpublishing.com. **GP**