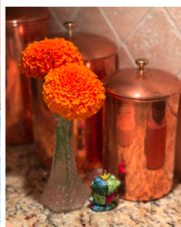


## Features

12/1/2021

## Stuff We Love

*Green Profit Editors*



### Chris Beytes:

#### More Bloom for Your Buck

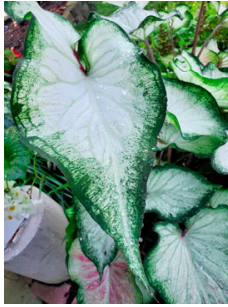
This summer, BloomStudios, the new cut flower division of Ball Horticultural Company, did a giveaway of seeds to employees of its new cut flower marigold called Xochi Orange. For fun, I grabbed a pack and sowed them into a big whiskey barrel that had been full of spinach.

Three months later I had this: a massive display of 4-ft. stems with big orange pompons on top. We enjoyed this display for a week or so, then cut them to bring them inside in several vases around the house, from large to single-stem. I don't know when we've ever gotten so much bang for our flower buck!

Even though Xochi isn't easily available to consumers, I suggest showing your customers how to become home cut flower growers, using any of the many long-stemmed annuals and perennials that are available. Plant some around your garden center and be sure to harvest regularly (with customers watching and asking questions) for prettying up your cash wraps, help desk or wherever. Share the cuts with employees and customers. And talk up the beauty of garden flowers that can be enjoyed in a vase!

#### A Hollywood Hit

In potted plants/tropicals, I love Earth Angel, the newest addition to J. Berry Nursery's Hollywood Hibiscus line. Pure, crisp white, with long-lasting flowers and plenty of them. Like all white flowers, it pairs perfectly with any other color, but it's great on its own, too.



## Jen Polanz:

### Caladium Fever

Remember when Tom Cruise jumped on Oprah's couch and declared his love for Katie Holmes? Well, that sentiment may not have lasted, but picture me jumping on a couch proclaiming my true love for caladiums (and I guarantee this love is forever). I'd never used them in my containers before, but after this

summer I'm a convert and a fan.

The Heart to Heart Caladiums from Proven Winners were easy to incorporate in my up-front containers, stupid-easy to maintain and looked great going into the end of October (October! I had pumpkins out on the porch near them!). These versatile plants tick a lot of gardener boxes: depending on the variety, they can thrive in sun or shade (mine were in dappled shade), they can be used in containers or in the landscape, and they can even be brought inside as houseplants. Now that's worth jumping on a couch.

### The Right Stuff

I'm often searching for the right tool for the job I'm doing, whether it's trimming back perennials, giving my annuals a haircut or snipping off dead wood from shrubs and thin tree branches. This year I found the right tool for all those jobs: these ratcheting hand pruners from Garrett Wade. I used them for three seasons (spring, summer and fall) and they're still sharp and quick to cut through most anything. They're very comfortable to use, with a rubber grip on the handle so you don't slip off the pruner. The blade is made of carbon steel with a non-stick coating. What I like is I can really get leverage on a thicker branch without hurting my hand (or the pruner) in the process.

### Fantastic Floriculture

It didn't surprise me in the slightest that Holland, Michigan, won this year's Coolest Downtown Award from America in Bloom. We took a quick getaway trip to Holland at the end of July and I wasn't disappointed. Its scenic location on Lake Michigan gave it the perfect backdrop for lovely evenings and the plantings—oh, the plantings! I particularly enjoyed the tribute to Frank L. Baum in Centennial Park, complete with this horticultural rendering of his famous book "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." Each city street seemed to be lined with mixed containers, window baskets and hanging planters. So, of course, springtime would be a beautiful time to visit because of the thousands of tulips on display, but I say visit Holland in the summer, too, for the beach and lake fun, shopping, dining and nightlife surrounded by beautiful plants!



## Jen Zurko:

### The Monstera Mash

I'm a big fan of houseplants. I have a 17-year-old pothos and an adolescent spider plant my daughter gave me for Mother's Day a few years ago that I transplanted into a bigger pot and is now having babies. But one of my favorites (and the one people point to when they come to my house) is the monstera that my very nice boss Chris Beytes and his wife gave to me after my grandfather passed away. I should have named it Audrey II because it's getting as big as the plant in "Little Shop of Horrors," but this one is not carnivorous (at least, it hasn't tried to eat us ... yet). I wish I could have more, but any plant or bouquet of flowers has to be placed from within reach of our 16-pound orange tabby Peanut, who's a houseplant assassin!

### Repurpose, Reuse, Recycle

Like many people, we did a lot of re-organizing and cleaning during the pandemic. We found this old CD tower in the attic, and instead of giving it away, I thought it would make the ideal "little plant tower." So my daughter and I got some small terracotta pots and fairy garden plants, painted the pots pink (she chose the color), and there you go! It made for an interesting centerpiece on the patio and our friends thought we were very clever.

### Stuff I Thought Was Old-Fashioned

Okay, I stand corrected—I don't "DISLIKE" *Impatiens walleriana*. Perhaps I just hadn't met one I liked ... until now. The color of Beacon Rose and its habit has made me an impatiens convert. And this year, I used Cannova Scarlet Canna as a thriller in my annual tuberous begonia planter. I have to say, it worked.



## Ellen Wells:

### Burpee's Mexican Sour Gherkin Cucumber

I truly do LOVE this new variety of cucamelon—and completely new-to-me type of plant—and you may be surprised why. But first, here's a quick rundown of what this cucamelon is: It's a type of cucumber with mottled and swirled greenish fruits, about the size of large grapes, with a tangy-sour flavor. As an intrepid

vegetable gardener, I was psyched to grow this. As it turns out, the fruits? Meh. Not my kind of thing (I even tried pickling them). BUT! I will buy this plant again and again for the beautiful and prolific lightly clinging vines it produces all season long. The description says the vines grow 4- to 7-ft. tall and wide. Way more! It fully covered the 15-ft. wire fence along the southern portion of my veg garden. The tons of little yellowy cucumbersque flowers appeared throughout the viny canopy like twinkle lights. The Mexican Sour Gherkin is now one of my franchise players.

### A Sunbelievable Pairing

I planted the Mexican Sour Gherkin a good 7 ft. from the Sunbelievable Brown Eyed Girl Sunflower sample I'd received earlier this spring, and wow, what a great pair these two plants made. Planted in the southeastern corner of the veg garden, it steadily grew and bloomed all summer long. In fact, it only began to peter out in the waning weeks of October. The tag says it grows to about 2-ft. tall, but mine is definitely more than 3 ft. As for width, it's got to be close to 4 ft. It says it takes a lot of water, and thankfully, between watering my veggie garden and the crazy amount

of rain we've had, I've been able to keep up.

This is the asexually propagated, non-invasive variety that claims to produce at least 1,000 flowers. I'd say true! The "non-invasive" part means it's not producing seeds, which to me is good and bad—I like having food for the birds, but I also like that I won't have to weed my garden of millions of sunflower seedlings next summer. I do love its rustic look and the color it brings to a veggie garden. And now I know not to plant my sun-needing veggies within 4 ft. of it.

**GP**