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## Grower News

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Editor John Esser

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### **Remember, save the Dates of August 2, 2018 and October 17, 2018**

#### **August 2, 2018 Field Day**

The 2018 CFGW Field Day 2018 features 335 varieties of vegetatively propagated Petunias provided by CFGW and 5 varieties provided by Ball Horticultural. Probably the largest trial of its kind in the United States.

This year's speakers will be Proven Winners Jessica DeGraaf discussing vegetative Petunias in today's greenhouse industry. The U.W. Madison's "Dr. Death" and the U.W.'s Plant Pathology Labs Director Dr. Brian Hudelson, as well as the interns who work with these trial plants each day.

The CFGW extends a special thank you to Tom and Chris Hartman, Hartman's Town and Country Greenhouse for rooting the Petunias used in these trials, Gloeckner's Matt Miller and Ball Horticultural's Greg Bogart for

obtaining the cuttings and the West Madison's West Madison Director Janet Hedtcke and her staff of interns for growing the trials in the field.

**The CFGW Field Day is a free event. No preregistration is necessary, and a free lunch will be served thanks to Carlin Sales and BFG. Come rain or shine!**

#### **October 17, 2018 Fall Greenhouse Conference**

The 37<sup>th</sup> annual fall greenhouse conference features Peace Tree Farm's dynamic and bearded Lloyd Traven. Peace Tree Farm is a USDA Certified Organic wholesale greenhouse company located in the countryside of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Peace Tree, founded in 1983, encompasses an acre of greenhouses on a historic 25-acre farm. It was named 'Peace Tree Farm' after the Native American word "tohickon", which means "peace tree". Peace Tree Farms supplies flowering potted plants and over 1,000,000 liners

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**A member of the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation (WGIF).**

to independent garden centers using innovative automation and sophisticated environmental controls. They specialize in unique annuals, herbs and vegetables.

Lloyd is a frequent speaker at Ohio's Cultivate and many other greenhouse programs nationwide. I have heard him speak several times and he comes with an innovative and irreverent attitude. He knows his stuff and knows how to pass that information on to those attending his presentations!

His first topic he titles "867-5309" from a 1983 Tommy Tutone hit musical recording which says, "Don't ever change." The song is about a that women not changing her phone number, but Lloyd suggests that to many greenhouses follow this guide and don't ever change. He says if you don't change you will become irrelevant. Change is necessary. He will do a second presentation titled "Finding a Niche with Edibles."

Our next speaker is John Martins was recommended by Stein's Jerry Schmitt. Many of you already know John as a salesman for Mastertag. His topic's title is "The STP of Gardening." These initials he says stand for "space", "time" and "place". He will address the competition our industry faces from the fact that over 40% of the U.S. population now lives in condos and apartments rather than single family homes and have no place to plant beds of flowers. How we need to compete with screens on our customer's TV, computer and phones plus many consumer's lack of time.

Our third speaker will be Gerry Giorgio, MasterTag Creative Director and is well known for his knowledge of marketing and the use of colors, type fonts, etc. which can help us promote our products.

Registration information will be sent out in September.

Editor

## Spring Discussions

### June 19, 2018 CFGW Membership meeting

Twenty-eight CFGW members were welcomed on June 19<sup>th</sup> at the CFGW Membership meeting held in Brooklyn, WI's North Parish Gardens and Voodoo Lounge. Attendees came from Green Bay, the Milwaukee area, Mukwonago, Madison area, etc. North Parish owner Ron Schraufnagel and his partner Sam (she is a landscaper) have designed and built the Voodoo Lounge a wonderful, garden, bar and place to relax. Call it whimsical, eclectic, exotic or weird the Voodoo lounge is one of our coolest meeting sites ever. Thanks Ron and Sam for hosting us!



*North Parish Gardens Mum Field*

North Parish is not your typical Wisconsin Greenhouse. They are strictly wholesale have only four greenhouses producing a limited but unique variety of high quality spring crop. What is unusual is most of their crop is grown on four acres of outdoor production. Ron and staff raise 30,000+ Fall Garden Mums for late summer and fall sales. They also grow fall flowering Asters, Kale, Swiss Chard, etc. Ron said his delivery area covers much of Southern Wisconsin.

Moderator CFGW's Vice President  
Chris Williams, owner of K&W

Greenery, opened the discussion by asking the attendees for their comments in what he called a “challenging” season with winter and heavy snow lasting well into April followed shortly by high temperatures, lots of rain for most of Wisconsin but dry in others. Several attendees commented that they had to cut shade fabric to save their greenhouse structures when the heavy snow hit in Mid-April. CFGW Board Member and North Parish employee Kyle Tillman said they found that pansies are very hardy to 21 degrees and Ron Schraufnagel reported plants covered with snow for five days still looked great when the snow melted.

Chris ask about customer counts this spring. He reported customer counts at K&W had been declining the last few years but were up this spring. Gordy Kopke, Kopke’s Fruit of the Bloom, reported his customer numbers were the same but the were spending more money. Gail Yerke, Yerke’s Frog Alley Greenhouse reported that they keep having people from their town saying that they had never been in their greenhouse before. How can that be in a relatively small town?

The conversation transitioned to bringing more customers into our businesses. Jeff Harpt, Schroeder’s Flowers/Fox Valley Greenhouse, Green Bay said they give children plants that they can plant themselves and take home. Board Member John Lewadowski said they added a coffee shop this spring which increased their customer traffic. John also reported that their dollar sales were up but only a little over Spring, 2017.

Gail Yerke asked how others advertised this spring. She said their local newspaper went out of business, so they did no print ads for 2018. Chris Williams said they do little with newspaper advertisements but most of their ad budget goes to TV. They’ve been doing more with computer search

engines, email ads, Facebook and some postcards all of which seem to work well for them. Younger clients are computer savvy and that is where they get much of their information. It was agreed it is difficult to track the effectiveness of ads.

Most attendees agreed spring classes are popular and bring people into your business. One attendee said they follow Groth’s Country Gardens, Cedarburg, WI lead because “what they do always works.” Groth’s have people bringing their own wine and enjoying an evening social event while planting their own containers. In one case teacher brought cookies for the attendees. All charge attendees for the plants, soil and containers and will hold the customer’s creations for a certain length of time or some hold them until the customer picks them up. Chris said they have six such events each spring but none over Easter week. If a customer attends all six they will receive a \$20 gift certificate to use at their greenhouse. One greenhouse does a Perennials only container class during Perennial Month while Schroeder’s has a “Plant your Junk” class with a prize awarded by a vote of participants. No one offered classes during the month of May, but John Lewadowski said they do have a summer class which can help clear some left overs from the season.

Chris Williams said they have invited bus tours which bring in new customers to their business. Gilbert Yerke reported that Gail purchased a bunch of children’s coveralls. Gail said she planted them with a bunch of inexpensive annuals and they sold very well. Frog Alley also does a spring production tour where they give tours of their greenhouse during the production season.

Paul Ruskiewicz, Paul’s Petal Pushers, said Suntastic Sunflowers, a dwarf potted sunflower variety, sold very well at his greenhouse but Mini Cyprus, Celosia Dragon’s Breath and Streptcarpella did not. Ron also asked

for suggestions for the best Begonia to grow in pots because he was not pleased with the Riseup Begonias he had tried. Most suggested Dragon Wing Begonias which continue to sell well year after year and perform in the garden. Some said they still have requests for true Ivy Geraniums but so few and the new interspecies crosses give much better performance outside. Betty Bless, CFGW board member and manager at America's Best Flowers, Cottage Grove, WI said they were long on 10" hanging baskets as well as Sun Coleus. Jeff Harpt from Schroeder's said white flowers sold very well this year and Chris responded that Euphorbia Diamond Frost sold out for him. Schroeder's was long on 4" pots but patio pots and hanging baskets sold well. Baskets of Wandering Jew with green leaf and red leaf varieties sold very well. Chris said he grew a Begonia named Canary Wing, a red flowered with yellow leaves, which was difficult to grow but when finished it sold well. Herb baskets sold well at some greenhouses and it was suggested that growing a mix of herbs suitable for a specific type of food sold very well.

The consensus of the meeting was that spring of 2018, though difficult, turned out well.

As always, thanks to those who attended and offered their comments. Your input makes an interesting, informative and useful meeting.

**Attend the next CFGW Membership meeting, you will learn something useful to your business!**

Editor

## **Why Do You CFGW Membership Meetings?**

That was the question I asked Betty Bless a long-time greenhouse grower, relatively new CFGW Board member and manager of America's Best

Flowers/Berry Hill Farms, Cottage Grove, WI as we were driving back to Cottage Grove from the January, 2018 CFGW board meeting. Here is her response:

“I mentioned that our membership meeting at Caan's Floral in November benefited me in that I was able to find that vendor with garland, wreaths and weather-resistant berries that we were looking for because I was able to see the product Caan's had on display and get a name off a tag. Every garden center/nursery/greenhouse visit I make, I'm always looking for products that others have that I think we could be successful with; things our customers would like.

“I think it's important to see how others do things, instead of only looking at things within your own biased "lens". When I went on the GCA and the GCG tours in Portland, OR and Houston, TX, I took over a thousand photos of signage, props that the different garden centers used for display, end caps, store layout, products, the fronts of their stores. I think it's important to get creative ideas from other people. Ed and Carol have visited hundreds of garden centers, nurseries, floral shops, botanical gardens etc. in their 40 years. Part of why they go is to get ideas from others.

“The networking that happens at these meetings is important. Keeping in contact with other people in the industry allows one to be up-to-date on what's going on with other greenhouses, garden centers and nurseries. Often times, things that are impacting one business are things that may impact many other businesses and it's a chance to talk through those things with others. Compliance, wages, benefits and labor are just some examples of universal issues we all have to deal with. It's nice to be able to talk to someone with a different perspective.”

Betty Bless

CFGW Board and Manage of America's Best Flowers

## Plant Seeds Now to Help Monarchs and Other Pollinators Next Year

"Fall is the perfect time of year to maintain habitat and plant native seeds that pollinators can depend on for food and shelter next year," says Eva Lewandowski, a conservation biologist for the Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Conservation program. "While many of our butterflies, bees, and other native pollinators have migrated out of the state or hunkered down for the winter, we can still help them." says the Wisconsin DNR's Eva Lewandowski.



Now is the time to plant native seeds that pollinators can depend on for food and shelter next year.

Photo Credit: DNR

The seeds of most plants native to Wisconsin need to go through cold stratification, meaning a period of prolonged cold, to grow successfully in the spring. The simplest way to accomplish that is for the seeds to be planted in the fall and exposed to cold winter weather, Lewandowski says. By planting native seeds this fall, people will be creating habitat in the spring for species like the monarch butterfly and the endangered rusty patched bumble bee, she says. April through October is when most pollinators are active in Wisconsin, so planting native plants that

bloom at different times can ensure that food is available when the pollinators need it, says Jay Watson, NHC conservation biologist and insect expert. Native milkweed species are the only plants monarch caterpillars can eat, while adult monarchs can use a variety of nectar plants like Joe-Pye-weed, coneflowers and asters.

Wisconsin residents also can help pollinator populations by leaving some fallen leaves in place, rather than raking or leaf-blowing and then disposing of all the leaves, Watson says.

Fallen leaves form a layer of leaf litter to house and protect pollinators during the winter. Some butterflies, bumble bees, and other beneficial pollinators burrow into the leaf litter or a few inches into the ground below it, and are insulated and sheltered until spring, he says.

"Pollinators play a critical role in supporting our native landscapes, agricultural systems, and gardens," Watson says. "Landowners can help ensure they have food and shelter here in Wisconsin."

Find a list of native plant nurseries, guides to native plants, and other useful information by searching the DNR website, [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), for keyword, "[pollinators](#)," where people also can sign up to receive periodic email or text updates about monarch or other pollinator conservation news in Wisconsin.

Eva Lewandowski  
Wisconsin DNR

## Foliage Plant Trend

For those of us who been in this industry since 1970s and early 80's you will remember the foliage plant boom of those days. Well maybe it's coming back. Foliage is becoming more popular. Check out the site [Bloomscape.com](http://Bloomscape.com). It was established in Detroit by Justin Mast of the horticultural Mast family and launched March, 2018. Bloomscape is an e-

commerce site that lets customers browse what they call “living room-ready” plants and purchase them on line and have them delivered to their home.

Editor

## Board Notes

Your CFGW Board met on June 14 via a telephone conference call. Paul Ruskiewicz’s treasury report indicated there is a balance of \$20,737 in the treasury.

Brian Karthaus reported that Henry Keisow from Flower Petals Greenhouse will be supplying the Wisconsin State Fair with flowering pots for the 2018 fair after the CFGW board decided not to supply the pots this year.

John Esser reported that he had visited our field trials at the U.W. West Madison Ag. Research station two times in the last couple of weeks and that the Petunias there were growing well and showing lots of color already.

The board decided to keep the registration and trade show fees for the 2018 Fall Greenhouse Conference the same as 2017. They have not been increased for several years. It was also decided to keep the CFGW membership dues for 2019 at \$140 per company. Also unchanged for many years.

Paul brought up the possibility of holding an auction of materials donated by members. It was decided not to do an auction at the Fall Conference because the board did not want to extend the length of the meeting. Brian was going to check with John Lewandowski to see if an auction could be done on the CFGW website.

Note, after the January board meeting John Esser asked board member Kyle Tillman to lead a subcommittee along with Betty Bless and John Lewandowski to research ways to increase CFGW membership. If you, a CFGW member,

have suggestions contact one of these board members. Despite meeting attendance increasing during the last few years CFGW membership continues to decline a little each year. John E. said DATCP lists over 1000 greenhouses with nursery licenses. We need to find a way to attract more to join.

Editor

## WNLA Replaces WGIF

On June 30, 2018 the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation will cease to exist and will be replaced on July 1, 2018 by the Wisconsin Nursery and Landscape Association (WNLA).

The CFGW thanks Brian Swingle and his staff for their years of service to the CFGW and Wisconsin’s green industry. We look forward to working with the WNLA in a stream lined capacity to support Wisconsin’s Horticultural industry.

CFGW’s Representative on the WNLA board will be John Lewandowski.

Editor

## I Say

I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes twenty years in a row.

## Program Schedule, 2018

**-August 2** Field Day @ West Madison Ag. Research Station. 340 Vegetative Petunias varieties on trial. The largest such trial in the U.S.?

**-September ??** @ BFG Janesville. Topic new varieties by Megan Lambert?

**-October 17** – Fall Greenhouse Conference at Floral Plant Growers, Denmark. Speakers will be Peace Tree’s Lloyd Traven, MasterTag’s John Martin and Gerry Giorgio with a marketing theme.

**-November ??** @ Site, speaker and topic not selected.