

language barriers

I just got back from California Spring Trials, a week-long trip down the coast seeing the latest and greatest breeders have to offer. In the June and July issues, we will be sharing with you highlights from incredible merchandising display ideas to new introductions sure to shine on your benches, but for now I wanted to touch on a few conversations I had there.

The first one was about genetically engineered petunias — those orange ones that were pulled off the market in 2017. The Canadian government has since said that they “pose no more risk to the environment than conventional petunias” and have chosen not to regulate them. The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service continues to do testing.

In California, we saw numerous new introductions from various breeders that got closer to the orange color or to a replacement for a petunia that was lost a couple years ago.

At the very first stop, I was asked the question, “If we end up selling genetically engineered petunias, how do we market or identify them?” My initial thought was that most of the world — and a large number of your shoppers — have no clue what a genetically engineered petunia is and probably do not care.

No one is eating these petunias, but I understand there may be a greater responsibility to inform consumers, which we won't talk about further here. There is also the possibility that we frighten shoppers more by the language that we use.

We see this often with fruits and vegetables: organic, GMOs, heirlooms, hybrids, non-treated and more are used as descriptors with little knowledge of what the buyer really understands.

On page 12, there's a great article on “Catering to Today's Vegetable Gardening,” which helps you break the myths of heirlooms and hybrids for your customers.

Then we can start having some of the fun conversations with shoppers like how growing these red jalapeño peppers will be perfect for making homemade sriracha sauce or which tomatoes make the most delicious salsa. That's really why people are growing their own food in the first place.

Turn to page 16 to read about some of the latest vegetable trends and what you may want to add to your mix to be first to market with the next hot thing, as well as carrying the classics.

don't wait

Have you submitted your entry to become Lawn & Garden Retailer's 2019 Merchandiser of the Year? What are you waiting for?

Entries must be submitted by June 13 for this year's competition. Send up to five photos of your favorite creative display or group of displays that appeared in your store this year to me at akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com. Make sure to include a short write-up with the purpose of the display, when it was featured, how you created it or what customers had to say. See page 41 for more information.



The finalists and the winner will be featured in upcoming issues of the magazine, and the top prize getter will receive a package from our sponsors.

Head on over to www.lgrmag.com/merchandiser-of-year for another way to submit your entries. While you're there, you can view the finalists and winners from previous years.

In the meantime, flip to page 26 for some display inspiration. We visited a number of garden centers throughout Pennsylvania, and here are some of the highlights.

Abby Kleckler, MANAGING EDITOR
616.520.2163 | akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com



EDITORIAL DIRECTOR	Tim Hodson , 616.520.2161 thodson@greatamericanpublish.com
MANAGING EDITOR	Abby Kleckler , 616.520.2163 akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com
GREEN GOODS EDITOR	Jasmina Dolce , 616.520.2162 jdolce@greatamericanpublish.com
MULTIMEDIA DESIGNER	Greg Ryan , 616.520.2145 gryan@greatamericanpublish.com
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	Samantha Orsi , 616.520.2148 sorsi@greatamericanpublish.com
CREATIVE DIRECTOR	Kristina Howell , 616.520.2168 khowell@greatamericanpublish.com
VICE PRESIDENT, GROUP PUBLISHER	Bob Bellew , 616.520.2164 bbellew@greatamericanpublish.com
INTEGRATED MEDIA CONSULTANT	Tiffany O'Kelley , 616.520.2172 tokelley@greatamericanpublish.com
INTEGRATED MEDIA CONSULTANT	Kim Sammartino , 616.520.2173 ksammartino@greatamericanpublish.com
INTEGRATED MEDIA CONSULTANT	Felix Schilling , 817.731.9352 felixschilling@sbcglobal.net
CLASSIFIED ADS	Kim Meyers , 616.520.2137 kmeyers@greatamericanpublish.com
GROUP MARKETING DIRECTOR	Melissa Gray , 616.520.2153 mgray@greatamericanpublish.com
AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT	Becky Stovall , 616.520.2138 bstovall@greatamericanpublish.com
CUSTOM CONTENT MANAGER	Jess Schmidt , 616.520.2141 jschmidt@greatamericanpublish.com
ACCOUNTS/BILLING	Sally Ostman , 616.520.2136 sostman@greatamericanpublish.com
COO	Kimberly Baker , 616.520.2135 kbaker@greatamericanpublish.com
CEO	Matt McCallum , 616.520.2133 mmccallum@greatamericanpublish.com

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