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# WORKING TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

**S**ustainability: A topic in the green industry that people cannot stop talking about. OK, so that is not the true definition of sustainability (which you can find the actual definition for in the sidebar below), but it is not an untrue statement. It has been quite the buzz so far this year, and I don't see it stopping anytime soon.

## Management Sustainability

In the last few months, it seems like every conversation I have always ends up focusing on the future and how horticultural sustainability is the path to a successful tomorrow. Recently, the American Nursery and Landscape Association's Management Clinic featured a keynote speaker named William McDonough, who is an architect, designer, speaker and writer as well as the founder of the sustainable design and development movement. He spoke to Management Clinic attendees in a standing-room-only ballroom and caused mouths to drop with some of the ideas and things he had to say about sustainability.

For the last 30 years, McDonough has been developing a unified philosophy that integrates business development and environmental stewardship principles and demonstrates how a synergistic partnership of commerce and nature is the only hope for sustaining human prosperity, according to his Web site. In fact, McDonough wrote a book, *Cradle to Cradle*, with his colleague Michael Braungart that is a manifesto calling for

the transformation of human industry through ecologically intelligent design. The book sold out at Management Clinic in just a few short minutes after his talk.

## Horticulture Sustainability

There are so many ways companies are trying to give us a sustainable future. How can we as an industry help with that? One way is to check out the new Ball Innovations business division at Ball Horticultural. This new business division has a program that is working on the sustainability movement. The Circle of Life program addresses the increased consumer demand for eco-friendly products. This new program is supposed to promote sustainable horticulture and bring eco-friendly plants to home gardeners.

What does this mean for you? Well, it boils down to something we have all been seeing in the last few years — consumers are looking for a healthier lifestyle and want to keep it that way. "Organic" everything has jumped in the trend category; however, the way it is climbing, I am not too sure it should really be considered a trend. I think it is now a way of life.

Recently, I sat at a dinner table with a few industry colleagues as the two of them debated the issue of organics and sustainability. One of them felt strongly that it was going to happen no matter what and sooner rather than later, while the other felt it wouldn't last and people should realize it was just the latest fad. I just kept quiet and listened to the whole thing. Both had extremely valid points and very strong opinions, but neither really came to a conclusion nor a common ground.

## It's Your Turn

What do you think? How do you feel this industry is doing as far as developing a more sustainable future? Can you see everyone coming together and pushing on until it sticks or do you see some apprehension? I have my opinions, but I am much more interested in hearing what you have to say about the whole thing. Send an E-mail to [cevans@sgcmail.com](mailto:cevans@sgcmail.com) so I can try and figure out where this industry is going with sustainability. Happy thinking! ✍️

## Sustainability

Sustainability is an attempt to provide the best outcomes for the human and natural environments both now and into the indefinite future. It relates to the continuity of economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society, as well as the non-human environment. It is intended to be a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society, its members and its economies are able to meet their needs and express their greatest potential in the present, while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and planning and acting for the ability to maintain these ideals in a very long term.

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