

President's Message

Hello WVNLA members. I hope you all are well and thriving in our green industry business out there in this fine little state.

As everyone reading this is fully aware, we have found ourselves in



David Hill II

unparalleled times in our lives, professionally and personally. Luckily for many of us, our industry was deemed "essential" in West

Virginia and we have been able to continue to work (with safety and caution in mind) during the pandemic shutdown and the reopening of the state.

As a result of this shutdown, many other industries had to re-create their standard workdays and implement new operations systems to accommodate CDC rules and maintain the safety and health of their employees. Hence, the new work model for so many across the country, including West Virginia, is to work from home. This made me start to think. Maybe as they were working from home (and spending more time there), people would want to spend more money on outdoor beautification projects and increase business for the nursery and landscaping industry.

I speculate that people are seeing potential in their yards and may have more time to plan and implement new garden spaces and outdoor living areas such as hardscapes and decking. Some of them may want a DIY project while others may wish to work with a professional. Although we don't yet have national or state industry specific data

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Leading Green Industry Consultant Headlines Symposium

We are pleased to announce that Marty Grunder will be the keynote business speaker at the 2021 Winter Symposium, to be held on February 9 in Charleston. Through the years, various WVNLA members who had heard Marty speak suggested that we bring him to the symposium. In 2021, we will make it happen!

Marty is president and CEO of Grunder Landscaping Company (GLC) and The Grow Group, a leading green industry consultancy. He is based in Dayton, Ohio.

When he was just a teenager, looking for a way to put himself through college, Marty discovered his entrepreneurial spirit with a used lawn mower.

Through determination and hard work, he grew that initial \$25 investment into GLC, one of the most successful operations of its kind in the Midwest. GLC has earned more than 40 local and national design awards, and is a two-time winner of the Better Business Bureau's



Marty Grunder will lead 2021 Symposium business program.

Eclipse Integrity Award. In addition, Marty has been named entrepreneur of the year by both Ernst & Young and the US Small Business Administration.

The author of *The 9 Super Simple Steps to Entrepreneurial Success*, Marty has coached thousands of landscaping professionals and companies across the United States and Canada. He has delivered more than 550 talks, motivating audiences of all sizes—from intimate gatherings of 20 to a stadium of 9,000—to achieve success.

He is also a columnist for *Landscape Management* and *The Buckeye* magazines; a board member of the NALP Foundation, Park National Bank of Southwest Ohio, and the Dayton Development Coalition; and a member of the board of trustees for Wright State University. He is a graduate of the University of Dayton School of Business.

WVNLA members will receive email notification when Winter Symposium registration opens in December.

Bob's Market and Greenhouses Stands Tall in Rankings

Congratulations to Bob's Market and Greenhouses, Inc. for two impressive rankings in *Greenhouse Grower's* annual listings. Owned by the Barnitz family, the Mason County business was ranked the 62nd largest grower in the United States and in the top 10 Young Plant Growers nationwide.

"We're proud of our growers ranking but even more proud of the Young Plant Growers ranking," said vice president Scott Barnitz, noting that in 2019, Bob's Market and Greenhouses seeded 150 million plugs (seedlings).

That's quite an accomplishment for a company that was founded in 1970 as a roadside produce market. Scott's parents, Bob and Corena Barnitz, built two greenhouses to supply their market and later added flowering bedding plants. In the 1980s, Bob's added a fleet of trucks and began shipping to companies along the East Coast.

As their production of wholesale plants grew, so did their need for increasingly larger greenhouses. Then, in the 1990s, when Ball Seed Company asked Bob's to become a plug supplier, business really took off. In 1998, Bob's Market produced seven million plugs for Ball Seed. The next year, production jumped to 28 million. Today, Bob's produces 150 million plugs annually for Ball Seed.

In addition to greatly increasing their plug production, Bob and his five sons expanded their retail presence in the surrounding area in the 1990s. They opened stores in Gallipolis and Belpre, Ohio, and Parkersburg, West Virginia. These stores complemented the original Mason County store.

Yet, in March of this year, the smoothly run business, like many others, abruptly hit COVID-19 roadblocks. The owners surmised that the plug segment of their business would likely be fine because it was already contracted, but the finished material segment was vulnerable to reduced retail sales. If garden centers weren't considered essential, they wouldn't be ordering hanging baskets.

But things turned out better than expected. "Ultimately, we fared well," Scott said. "We were concerned about overproduction, so we planted less and underproduced." Bob's sold out of product, which is, of course, better than being left with unsold product.

Eventually, most states deemed garden centers essential and so they opened for business. Springtime stay-at-home orders, good weather, and a May with five Saturdays and Sundays helped plant sales.

"Typically, in March, when the weather warms, people want to get out there. They have cabin fever. But COVID locked that down. People couldn't go anywhere and they had money in their pockets. Garden centers did well," explained Scott.

If Bob's Market weathers future obstacles as well as it

handled COVID-19, it's likely its *Greenhouse Grower's* rankings will continue to rise. We wish them much continued success!



Learn more about Bob's Market and Greenhouses at bobsmarket.com or call 304-773-5323.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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yet, market signs indicate this is already happening nationally. As early as May 2020, Lowe's reported 11% sales growth compared to the anticipated 3.3% growth of a typical springtime. Some of this growth was due to outdoor home landscaping projects. It only makes sense that some of this growth may be due to commercial sales.

As this virus continues to affect our daily lives and many of us spend more time at home, I would not be surprised if there is a long-term trend towards finishing home projects and investing more time and money into homes. As more and more people work from home, I believe an uptick in business in the green industry will result.

We at the West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association would love to hear how your business has been affected – positively or negatively. We hope to share tips about how to adjust to the changing market conditions in future newsletters.

I hope all of you and your families are well and getting through these unprecedented times. Until next time, stay safe and stay strong out there.

Dave Hill
WVNLA President

Safely Dispose of Pesticide Containers at Approved Sites

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture maintains 11 pesticide container recycling sites throughout the state, according to Jennifer Hathaway, environmental programs specialist with the department. Each site features a 20- or 40-foot metal shipping container for collecting jugs that are dropped off for safe disposal.

There is no fee to participate in the recycling program, which is open to all pesticide applicators, including farmers, orchard growers, golf course operators, and lawn care, landscape, and exterminator companies.

Before disposing of pesticide containers, please triple or pressure wash them and remove lids, labels, and any metallic pieces. It's crucial to rinse the containers because even a few tablespoons of pesticide left in "empty" containers can contaminate groundwater and expose children, employees, pets, and livestock to the chemicals. Puncture empty containers to prevent reuse. Although not required, it is helpful if transporters tie the containers together with string or place them in plastic trash bags.

In 2019, WVDA collected approximately 9,000 pounds of used pesticide containers. The containers are chipped up and used to make items such as pallets, drain pipes, and fence and sign posts.

For more information, contact Jennifer Hathaway at jhathaway@wvda.us or 304-541-9632.



WVDA Pesticide Container Recycling Sites

Applecrest Orchard

191 Wasser Drive
Martinsburg, WV 25403

Coonskin Park

375 Henry C. Shores Drive
Charleston, WV 25311

Turn into the park, drive about 0.75 miles, then turn left up the hill to the driving range. Continue up the hill on the gravel road to the recycling container.

The Resort at Glade Springs

2400 Ritter Drive
Daniels, WV 25832

*Located at Woodhaven Course. Contact **who?** for back gate entrance, then use Forest Haven Drive to get to recycling container.*

Greenbrier Resort Golf Maintenance

1 Sporting Club Drive
White Sulphur Springs, WV 24986

McCausland Farm

13280 Kanawha Valley Road
Henderson, WV 25106

Oglebay Resort Country Club

Oglebay Drive
Wheeling, WV 26003

Located at Central Receiving, across the road from Lodge Drive

Orr's Farm Market

682 Orr Drive
Martinsburg, WV 25403

Southern States

222 North Mildred Street
Ranson, WV 25438

Spring Valley Farm

1225 Hickory Corner Road
Augusta, WV 26704

Stonewall Jackson Resort

Overlook Road
Weston, WV 26452
Available weekdays

WVDA Moorefield Office

Moorefield Industrial Park Road
Moorefield, WV 26836

Family is at the Root of Scots Success

When Scot Witkosky applied for a nursery license in 1976, at the age of 16, he had no idea the results it would yield some 44 years later. But season after season, year after year, his efforts and the expertise of many members of the Witkosky family, including his parents, produced a harvest of growth, a passion for quality, and a legacy of community support.

For many years, Scots provided plants, seeds, and



garden supplies in its retail store, located in Vienna, West Virginia, and offered landscape design, installation, and maintenance services as well. Scot's wife, Jamie, a landscape architecture graduate of West Virginia

University, joined the team 36 years ago. Customers are drawn to the rustic, wood-sided grist mill and comfortable, wide front porch, which features the soothing sounds of the mill's waterwheel turning gently in the background.

As the company continued to grow and establish a reputation for quality plants and landscape materials, coupled with innovative outdoor design, space on the 11-acre property was at a premium. It quickly filled with greenhouses and ground devoted to plants Scots cultivated for sale and use for landscape clients.

Scot and Jamie have two daughters, Callie and Madeson, who grew up in the business, helping out wherever they were needed. Madeson always had a special love for the family business, and so, after a successful tenure in the health management and communication field, she decided to return to her roots and rejoin the business full time.

"I was raised here. I always loved the store and decided just to take it over. It just felt right," said Madeson.

Madeson currently runs the retail market segment of the business and has quickly proven to be an instrumental part to the company's continued success. Her decision to take on management of the store in 2014 breathed new life into an already thriving garden center. Together, she and Jamie expanded the company's retail line with unique gifts and

collectibles, filling the loft with a series of dynamic displays that showcased local artisans and fun merchandise.

Ultimately, the store set new records in daily retail sales and customer traffic.

The dynamic mother/daughter duo came up with another winning business segment four years ago when they added Sugar Grove, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor and bake shop, front and center on the Scots campus. The addition of the gift shop, bakery, and ice cream parlor were prompted in part by a tightening market.

"The big box stores squeezed the life out of garden centers. We had to reinvent ourselves," Jamie said. "When I visited garden centers in other cities, I saw that they often offered more than just green goods to encourage people to hang around for a while. I thought that was a great idea and that we could do something like that here." Apparently, customers agree with her. They line up in the nostalgically-decorated shop on "Friday Pie Day" to snag pies baked onsite and delicious ice cream creations.

Today, Scots employs about 50 people, with each of the three Witkoskys in charge of their domains. Jamie oversees the landscape design, installation, and maintenance division, running crews daily for commercial and larger-scale residential properties. She stays current on trends and diversified plant material to keep designs fresh. Her diverse portfolio includes everything from residential landscapes and patios to lavish outdoor kitchens and poolside grounds.

Scot, with his degree in landscape horticulture, oversees the construction crews and growing division. As head of the retail segment, Madeson has harnessed the power of social media to generate customer traffic and improve service. Scot's parents, both in their 80s, still work in the business each day, setting an example for living lives based on faith, giving, and hard work.

The team was just gearing up for the busy season in March when COVID-19 reports indicated things were about

Please see SCOTS on next page.



Madeson Barr inspects plants in the greenhouse at Scots.

Association Welcomes New Members

City of Morgantown – Urban Landscapes

Associate member
Marchetta Maupin
389 Spruce Street
Morgantown, WV 26505
mmaupin@morgantownwv.gov
morgantownwv.gov
304-284-7422
Municipal public garden

East River Landscapes

Active member
Ryan Moody
227 Parkway St.
Bluefield, WV 24701
eastriverlandscapeswv@gmail.com
304-774-5741
*Landscape construction, lawn and landscape maintenance,
Christmas tree grower*

Meadows Farms Nurseries and Landscape

Associate member
Jay Meadows
43054 John Mosby Highway
Chantilly, VA 20152

703-327-3940

assttopres@meadowsfarms.com
meadowsfarms.com

*Landscape and lawn maintenance, hardscape design and
installation, retail garden center*

Penn Line Services, Inc.

Associate Group
David Lynn, president
300 Scottdale Ave.
Scottdale, PA 15683
724-887-9110
tseaman@pennline.com
pennline.com
Arborists – tree services.

RPM Services

Active member
Jeff Roy
600 6th Avenue
St. Albans, WV 25177
304-722-0078
jeff@evmgt.com
*Landscape architect or designer, landscape construction,
landscape and lawn maintenance, hardscape design and
installation, landscape lighting, irrigation, seasonal lighting*

SCOTS *Continued from page 4.*

to change. Scots was forced to send their landscape crews home briefly, until the “essential business” ruling included landscapers. In addition, they weren’t sure how to keep retail customers and employees safe. Meanwhile, they had fresh crops ready in their growing houses.

After a lot of thought and prayer, the team relied on faith and ultimately decided curbside pickup was the answer. Madeson added photos of available plants to their Facebook page, so that customers could place orders online and select a pickup time. And order they did. For about four frantic weeks, employees scrambled to organize, fill, and deliver orders to customers waiting in assigned parking spots. They even delivered ice cream that way.

“Business picked up extremely quickly. We couldn’t keep our retail greenhouses full,” Madeson said. Sales of plants and merchandise of all types continued on a steady track throughout the COVID-19 event, thanks to the initiatives of the Scots team and the support of their customers.

“We couldn’t have done it or survived without our customers, and we are all so thankful for them. They’ve supported us since we opened, and during COVID, they really were a blessing to us,” Madeson said. “I know that



A customer smiles as she reaches for her treat in Sugar Grove at Scots.

one day I’ll look back and know that we persevered, when others just closed. I’m so proud that we didn’t.”

Open from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday, Scots is located at 6303 Grand Central Avenue in Vienna. Visit scotslandscape.com or call 304-295-6303 for additional information.

Sale of Japanese Barberry Officially Outlawed

As of July 1, 2020, the sale and distribution of Japanese barberry, *Berberis thunbergii* DC, is officially illegal in West Virginia. During the 2018 regular legislative session, legislators approved state Agriculture Commissioner Kent Leonhardt's recommendation to add Japanese barberry to the West Virginia Noxious Weeds List as part of an effort to control the invasive plant.

"Although a popular landscaping option, Japanese barberry is an invasive plant that destroys farm and forested areas. It was added to the Noxious Weeds List so we could better control the entry of the plant into our borders," said Commissioner Leonhardt in a statement in June.

West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) nursery inspectors will quarantine and issue stop-sale orders for Japanese barberry when they encounter it. WVDA has received \$100,000 in federal grant dollars to fight the invasive plant in Cacapon Resort State Park.

When the ban was originally proposed, WVNLA landscapers and growers fought for a two-year grace period to allow them to sell down stock. The grace period was approved and it ended July 1. The Association also requested that the resolution adding barberry to the state's Noxious Weeds List allow for the future exemption of noninvasive or sterile cultivars. The request, which grants the WVDA commissioner the authority to make such



Japanese barberry can self seed and thrive in untended areas.

exemptions, was also included in the legislation.

WVNLA provided research on noninvasive cultivars, specifically Sunjoy "Mini Maroon," "Golden Devine," and "Emerald Carousel," to Commissioner Leonhardt, who sent it to state researchers for review. Results are pending.

For more information, contact the WVDA Plant Industries Division at 304-558-2212.

Spring and Summer Exams Net Successful CPH Results

Congratulations to Hannah McDonald, a horticulturist for the City of Morgantown, who took and passed the Certified Professional Horticulturist exam when it was offered on July 29 in Morgantown. She has also met the education and experience requirements set forth for the certification.

Congratulations also to nine new Certified Professional Horticulturists, who passed the exam in May at the St. Marys Correctional Institute in Pleasants County. Agriculture instructor Jenny Stoneking prepared these students for the exam, using the CPH study manual. When they are released from the correctional facility, the students say they hope holding a professional certification will give them an advantage in job searches in the nursery and landscape industries.

The newly certified horticulturists from St. Marys are: Allan Belcher, Dwaine Jones, Robert Joseph, Daniel Lipps, Farris Mallo, Bill McLaughlin, Michael Morton, Julius Suter and Joshua Webster



Join WVNLA's Members Only Facebook Group to Reach Your Peers

Do you know of a great deal, tip, photo, project or opportunity you'd like to share with your colleagues? Post it at on WVNLA's Members Only Facebook page. The information will go only to member industry insiders who have been accepted as group members. You should have

received an email invitation to join. If not, please email wvnlassoc@gmail.com or call 304-553-1234 to update your email address in our records. Or, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/209531356199320> to join.

Nursery and Landscape Companies Work Through Difficult Times

In the halcyon days, before the word *COVID* dominated nearly every conversation and newscast, everyone in the nursery and landscape industry was gearing up for the usual springtime rush of growing, planting, mowing, and clearing. At WVNLA, another Winter Symposium and winter pesticide training session had just transpired, and we were making plans for spring and summer meetings and events.

Then, we watched in disbelief as the virus hit our country and made its way into every state. West Virginia, happy for once to be at the bottom of a list, was the last state to go without a reported case. But eventually, we, too, succumbed.

West Virginia Governor Jim Justice announced a “stay-at-home” order and closed all businesses that were not deemed “essential.” WVNLA worked with WVDA Commissioner Kent Leonhardt and the governor’s office to designate growers, landscapers, and garden center staff as essential workers, arguing that landscapers are crucial to maintaining safe and pest-free properties, and that growers and garden centers supply customers with food-producing plants such as vegetables, berry bushes, and fruit and nut trees.

WVNLA members breathed sighs of relief at their “essential” designation but struggled to make sense of evolving COVID worker safety guidelines and the myriad loans and other assistance made available to small businesses. Some garden centers that stayed open reported increased sales, especially of fruits and vegetables, which they acquired from both experienced gardeners and those venturing into planting for the first time. Parents turned to gardening as an educational exercise for their bored, out-of-school children. Who knows how many of these experiences will spark lifelong interest in gardening and



Inspired by 2019 Winter Symposium speaker Claudia West, a garden club in Charleston planted a pollinator bed last year near Fort Scammon. It continues to flourish and attract butterflies and bees.

landscaping, and, consequently, boost horticulture sales or even careers as well?

The owners of Scots, a garden center and landscape business in Vienna (*see article page 4*), scurried to offer curbside service for the safety of both their customers and employees. The service was a resounding success and resulted in higher than normal springtime sales.

Scots employees temporarily changed the way they did business, as



Julie Robinson

has nearly everyone in the face of new, COVID-related standards and procedures. At WVNLA, we held our usual summer Pesticide Recertification course in Morgantown in July. The course filled more quickly this year, with fewer places available due to social-distance spacing requirements. Seating in the large room that normally accommodates 200 people was limited to 50, with only one seat at each eight-foot table. Further complicating matters, three speakers from WVU Extension found out the day before the event that they had a potential COVID exposure, and so they were quarantined. However, they were able to deliver their presentations via Zoom with surprisingly few glitches, and could easily hear and respond to questions from the audience.

During the meeting, several WVDA Plant Regulatory speakers complimented WVNLA on getting the word out several years in advance about the July 1 barberry ban. One nursery inspector reported that in his many visits to nurseries and garden centers throughout the state, only one garden center had barberry plants on site. The center readily destroyed the four barberries on their lot. Inspectors say they have been pleasantly surprised not to find more.

While it isn't quite business as usual at WVNLA, we are keeping to our agenda. We'll continue to monitor and advocate for legislative issues such as H2b visas for seasonal employees. We'll offer education for our members in one form or another. We'll continue to encourage growth and professionalism in the industry through the Certified Professional Horticulturist program. You can also count on us to get you information on evolving COVID guidelines and other industry hot topics.

I'd like to congratulate so many of you who have successfully adopted new protocols and continued to serve your customers during this difficult time. You are a resilient group. Please stay safe out there.

Julie Robinson is West Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association's Executive Director.

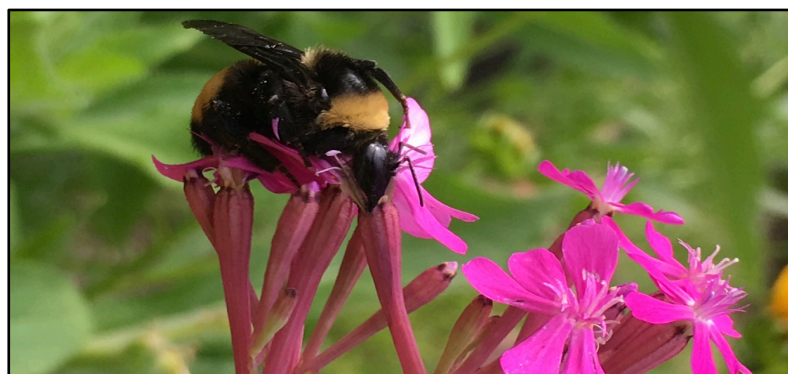
WVNLA NEWS

P. O. Box 20284

Charleston, WV 25362

WVNLA Dates to Note

- Oct. 20 WVNLA Board Meeting, Stonewall Resort, 10 a.m.
- Jan. 6-8 MANTS, Baltimore, MD www.mants.com
- Feb. 9 WVNLA Winter Symposium, Charleston
www.wvnla.org
- Feb. 10 Pesticide Applicators Recertification Training,
Charleston www.wvnla.org
- Feb. 10 Certified Professional Horticulturist exam, 4 p.m.
Charleston www.wvnla.org



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