



I-Plants Magazine

**Highlights of the 2024 International
Plantscape Awards Gala**

**UPDATE on new Interior Plantscape
Technician Online Certification Program**

The Secret Life of Plants

**Newgrange: The Massive Irish Tomb that
is older than the Pyramids**

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Contents

- Pg. 8** Highlights from the 2024 International Plantscape Awards Gala Event.
- Pg. 20** How to order your additional winning company 2024 International Plantscape Award.
- Pg. 28** A 5,000-mile living wall could hold back the world's largest desert.
Story by: Nell Lewis; video by Stefanie Blendis, CNN
- Pg. 30** A Newgrange: The Massive Irish Tomb That's Older than the Pyramids.
Article Source:: Archaeology World Team
- Pg. 36** The Secret Life of Plants.
By Carolyn Goodin, CLP-I
- Pg. 42** 10 Fun Shamrock Facts for St.Patrick's Day!



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Highlights of the 2024 TPIE

The third annual International Plantscape Awards Gala was a huge success!

Elliott and Tammy want to send out a heartfelt thank you to all our award winners and all companies who entered, as well, thank you to our corporate partners and sponsors, corporate table sponsors and individual ticket holders for the outstanding support that was received for the 2024 International Plantscape Award Gala that was held at TPIE on January 18, 2024 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

We increased our awards program entries by over 83%, and increased our gala event participation by over 20%. We raised over of \$56,500 which was over 26% increase in event gross revenues from the previous year.

Proceeds raised from our gala supported the National Horticulture Foundation, specifically designated to educational programming and to the 'Interior Initiative Growth Endowment Fund (IIGF)' to create long term sustainability for the Interiorscape Industry!

*10%proceeds of each awards entry from the awards program was also designated back to the IIGF that is included in the gross and net revenue totals.

Much gratitude and love to you all!!!





**Elliott Bennett & Tammy Hildebrand
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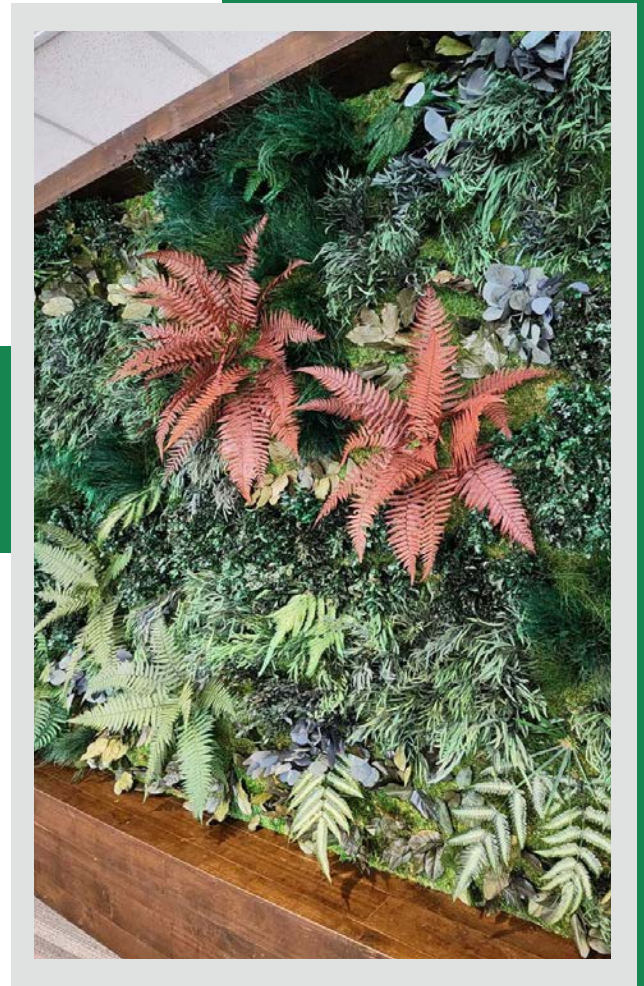
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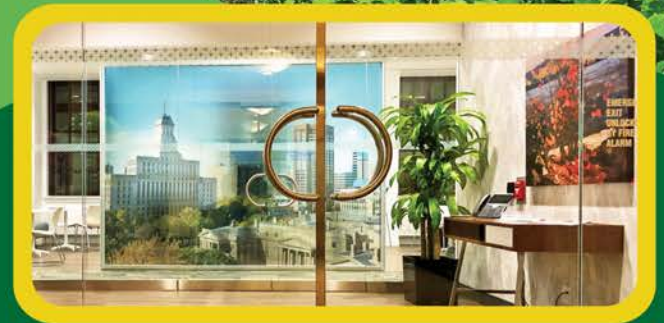
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A 5,000-mile living wall could hold back the world's largest desert

Story By: Nell Lewis; video by Stefanie Blendis, CNN

The world's largest desert is growing. In the last century, the Sahara Desert expanded by more than 10%, now covering an area of more than 3.3 million square miles (8.6 million square kilometers) and spanning 11 countries in the north of Africa.

The Sahel region, a semi-arid belt that acts as a buffer zone just south of the desert, is most affected.

Water, already scarce, is becoming scarcer. Soil quality is deteriorating, and a lack of vegetation is leading to food insecurity. The UN estimates roughly 135 million people who depend on these degraded lands are at risk.

But an ambitious plan, launched by the African Union in 2007, could help to hold back the hot sands and protect the Sahel communities. Within the next decade, the Great Green Wall initiative hopes to restore 100 million hectares of land between Senegal in the west and Djibouti in the east, creating a 15-kilometer-wide (9 miles) and 8,000-kilometer-long

(5,000 miles) mosaic of trees, vegetation, grasslands and plants.

Having previously struggled with insufficient and unpredictable funding, the project received a major boost in January: \$14 billion in new funding from France, the World Bank and other donors -- contributing nearly half of the \$33 billion the UN estimates is needed to achieve the 2030 goal.

If completed in full, the wall will be more than three times the length of the Great Barrier Reef, currently the largest living structure on Earth. Fresh shoots
Nine years away from its deadline, there is still a long way to go.

So far, 4 million hectares of land has been restored -- just 4% of the overall goal -- though this rises to almost 20 million hectares when counting areas outside of the official Great Green Wall zones. Countries have tried a variety of conservation measures, such as reforestation, agroforestry, creating terraces, and dune fixing -- a technique



that prevents the movement of sand long enough to let natural vegetation establish itself. They are also taking steps to protect water supplies, by drilling bore holes and building irrigation systems.

Ethiopia is reported to have restored the most so far, producing 5.5 billion plants and seedlings, and planting more than 150,000 hectares of reforested lands and 700,000 hectares of terraces -- which together make up an area more than five times the size of London.

Among the biggest lessons learned is the importance of community collaboration, says Tangem. "We went back to the frontline communities and looked exactly at their needs and the indigenous knowledge and practices that have been going on for centuries," he says.

Community value

Sarah Toumi, a French-Tunisian environmentalist involved in the initiative's recent fundraising push, agrees that such an ambitious project will only be possible if local residents are fully behind it. The organization has planted more than 700,000 acacia trees in the

region. Bringing communities into the initiative and demonstrating the value of restoration has been vital to the sustainability of the project. Toumi's organization helps to teach farmers how to harvest the leaves, fruits and gum of the plant so that they can make a living from it.] Promoting peace

As the population grows rapidly in the region, land restoration combined with job creation is becoming all the more urgent. Across the African continent, more than half of the 375 million young people entering the job market in the next 15 years will be living in rural areas.

By involving 11 countries, the initiative could help to unite African leaders, she adds, "(bringing) life back to that region of the world, which will help us stabilize that part of Africa on political grounds.

Tangem agrees, noting "the strong link between natural resource management and political stability in the region." Once complete, the Great Green Wall could help provide a nature-based solution with a global impact.

NEWGRANGE: THE MASSIVE IRISH TOMB THAT'S OLDER THAN THE PYRAMIDS

Article Source:: ARCHAEOLOGY WORLD TEAM



Yep, 5,000 years. That's older than Stonehenge. It's older than the great Egyptian pyramids, too.

And five millennia later, it hasn't lost any of its wonders.

Newgrange was built around 3200 B.C. — hundreds of years before the Great Pyramid of Giza (2500 B.C.) and Stonehenge (3000 B.C.).

The massive hemispherical tomb is located in the Brú na Bóinne – Gaelic for the “palace” or “mansion” of the River Boyne. This 3 square mile area contains nearly a hundred ancient monuments, including two other large tombs, in addition, Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth.

Arriving at the iconic tomb is a wow-moment, to say the least. Standing outside the 80-meter mound, shored up with spiral-engraved kerbstones and topped with white Wicklow quartzite, a guide reveals the myths and history behind the

monument. Newgrange could have been designed as a tomb or a temple – in reality, nobody knows which. The truth will be shrouded in mystery forever.

Let there be light...

Once the scene has been set for you as a visitor, you'll step inside the passage tomb itself, squeezing through standing stones carved with spiraling rock art and graffiti dating back to the 1800s (before Newgrange was taken into State care). Ducking under beams of wood, you'll emerge into the cool confines of a cruciform-shaped chamber like a stony igloo squirreled away within a hill.





This inner sanctum is where a lucky few (chosen by lottery from thousands of applicants annually) huddle together to witness the annual winter solstice illumination. At this moment, when megalithic engineering and nature lock sensationally into sync, a shaft of light can be seen snaking 19 meters up the

passageway, ultimately bathing the chamber in light. There are goosebumps, to say the least... If you're not one of the lucky ones, don't fret. All visitors are treated to a simulated solstice, with an orange beam of light artificially showcasing the effect. It's a tantalizing little taster – little wonder **legend suggests that this was**





the site where mythological hero Cú Chulainn was Born. Subterranean secrets...

Newgrange isn't the only passage tomb in Ireland, of course. In fact, it's not the only passage tomb at Brú na Bóinne. Together with nearby Knowth and Dowth, Newgrange has declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1993.

Not bad for a site that once looked destined to become a quarry!

Not far away, near Oldcastle, County Meath, you'll find a lesser-known cluster of passage tombs. Spotted around a handful of hills at Loughcrew are several cairns also dating from around 3,200BC. Because they're more obscure and harder to get to, the Indiana Jones effect is all the more titillating.

If you get the sense that you're being watched here, you may well be right. Some 60km away, atop of Slieve Gillian in County Armagh, the

passage of another tomb points directly back towards Loughcrew.

Slieve Gillian's two cairns lie on either side of a summit lake, with the southern tomb said to have a winter solstice alignment at sunset.

On a good day, the views stretch as far as Dublin Bay, which is another reason to make this glorious trip!





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The Secret Life of Plants

By: Carolyn Goodin, CLP-I

Would you believe me if I told you that plants have feelings? Could you imagine that plants communicate in distinctive ways? Well why not? Every day we learn new and amazing things about our green friends. Is it possible, sure, but is it probable?

Indulge me as I share some of the most remarkable research I have ever encountered. Several months ago, I read “The Secret Life of Plants.” By Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird. Not an easy read by any measure, however I was captured only after reading a few short reviews. I will try to do my best to pick out the information which fascinated me and not bore you with the complicated research that went into this remarkable book.

Published back in 1974, The Secret Life shared some excerpts with Harper’s Magazine in 1972. The Secret Life of Plants is a compilation of experiments carried out by using a simple polygraph machine. A man by the name of Cleve

Backster, in 1966, discovered that plants reacted to certain stimuli that began a revolution in thinking, that plants are “aware” of their surroundings and reacted to fear, danger and safety. Backster was the first to use the polygraph machine to detect reactions in plants because he was America’s foremost polygraph examiner. Backster kept his findings low key. He did not think his work was worthy of further examination, until he could get funding for better equipment, to study his “Backster effect” The scientific community did show bona fide interest in Backster’s work and gave him a grant to invest in more sophisticated equipment. Backster’s initial results came when he decided to attach an electrode to a *Dracaena Massangeana*, leaf. He “threatened the plant with burning. No reaction

seen when he threatened to dip the leaves into hot coffee. However, when he threatened it with fire the plant reacted violently. This came after Backster produced matches. The violent reaction created a belief that plants can distinguish between a possible threat and a probable threat. Can plants think? Do plants have ESP?

Can plants read minds? Describing this reaction as ESP was what Backster deemed inappropriate, plants do not have senses.

No Eyes, no ears, no tastebuds, no nose, but do have a the ability to sense. What the man decided to do was to release the results so that the scientific community could attempt to repeat his experiments. After all, being able to repeat an experiment with the same results is a standard of the scientific method.

The results were replicated and this set off an explosion of interest to determine whether plants can, read minds. Back to Backster grant. It was a long time coming but Backster now had the needed funding to conduct his experiments with more sophisticated equipment. He purchased electrocardiographs, and electroencephalographs. These instruments had the advantage of not exposing the plants to electric current as with the polygraph machines. Somehow the plants were able to know the difference between a real threat and a probable threat. Later experiments included the use of carrots. The carrots reacted to the presence of a rabbit in the room. Did the plant know that rabbits eat carrots? A similar reaction was noted when the carrots were exposed to a spider. What was it about the spider that “scared” the plants?





Backster's initial experiments went on to inspire researchers from all over the world to either replicate or find other means to study plants and their abilities to communicate with humans. All sorts of equipment were employed to gather data showing plants have emotions, develop emotional attachments to the researchers, and responded to affection. The experiments concluded that plants reacted to kind words. Those plants which were subjected to spoken words of affection, as opposed to being ignored, thrived while those who were given basic attention without spoken words of affection did not grow and thrive. Do plants respond to love? This started the idea that loving one's plants helped them to grow better. Thus, it was postulated that if one talks to one's plants, they will indeed respond in a positive manner. Do you talk to your plants? A casual observation I made recently, proved to me that this postulate has substance. I was very sick for most of the month of December. I could barely get

out of bed, let alone tend to my personal plant collection. I am one who believes showing love, attention and speaking kind words do help plants to thrive.

My plants were neglected, as it were. Today, feeling much better, I decided that I needed to give my plants the needed care they were lacking.

I was appalled to observe that many of my plants suffered from dead and dying leaves. My florals stopped blooming, and in many cases my plants looked half dead. I went about the care, cleaning up the dead and dying messes apologizing to each of them as I went along. Sounds kookie doesn't it?

All I can say is the lack of attention to my plants while I was ill, did have deleterious effects on my collection.

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An Interesting Side Story (cont.)

In late October of 1971, an electronics engineer, by the name of George Lawrence, brought his electronic equipment to a desert area near the Pechenga Indian Reservation. He chose this area because there were no man-made electronics in the area and he felt he could get clean readings, from the plants in the area without outside interference. He set up his equipment but before he trained the apparatus on his plant subjects, he and his assistant sat down for a bite to eat. While eating his equipment was whistling, beeping, and making unsolicited sounds. Lawrence was perplexed. Where were these sounds coming from? When he looked at his apparatus, he realized it was trained toward the sky. Something from space was sending signals which were being picked up by his equipment. Lawrence moved his equipment to the Mohave Creator, where there isn't even a blade of grass to interfere with his new found interest. Thus, starting out as a means, to collect communications from plants, became an interest of collecting Communications with Extraterrestrial Intelligence. Now referred to as CETI.

The newer research, which is a bit beyond my ability to explain, indicate that there is a bona fide connection between the animal and plant kingdoms. All life is dependent on an association. Whether it is for sustenance, emotional attachments, feelings of wellbeing or what have you, we learned, these

connections are meaningful. Of course, the NASA studies proved our wellbeing depends on our connection with the plant kingdom. Backster's experiments and others who followed his remarkable research, proves that plants need the human connection just as much as humans need the plant connection. NASA discovered that plants help clean the air. They absorb Volatile Organic Compounds from the air and through interactions with the soil, break down these VOCs to absorbable nutrients which are used for growth. Recently a group of Japanese students, at Saitama University discovered that plants communicate with each other. A plant which is under attack from insects, will emit VOCs as a warning to surrounding plants. These VOC's "tell" the other plants in close proximity, about a danger. Plants then activate whatever pre-emptive protective responses which help ward off the insect attacks. More information on this subject can be found in the Journal: Nature Communications. I have given food for thought. A plant is not just a plant. We are partners in this universe, dependent on each other for the better wellbeing of all. The whole planet is a garden, to be cared for properly. This includes communication love and affection toward our green friends. Wasn't it a very wise man who taught us to love one another? Loving plants is included. Without the plant kingdom, life as we know it would not exist.







10 Fun Shamrock Facts for St. Patrick's Day

The shamrock is so heavily associated with Ireland's heritage and history that it is often called the unofficial symbol of Ireland.

1. Shamrocks Only Have 3 Leaves

Lots of people confuse the shamrock with the so-called lucky four-leafed clover. These plants are not quite the same thing. Although they are both clovers, they are different because of the number of leaves and the associated meanings that are given to the plants based on this. Both the shamrock and the four-leafed clover come from the white clover plant. This plant normally has only three leaves that come off from each stem. *Trifolium Repens* is the scientific name for this plant, and *Trifolium* means "three leaves." The four-leaf version is a rare variation or mutation of this clover and is, therefore, much harder to find. In fact, there are also five-leaf clovers and more which are also rare.



2. The Shamrock Is Not the Official Symbol of Ireland

This three-leaf clover called the shamrock is one of the most widely recognized symbols of Ireland and is often referred to as the unofficial symbol of this country. The official symbol is actually the Irish harp instead. Many people take one glance at the shape and the green color of this plant and then immediately identify it with Ireland. The shamrock is referred to as the national plant of this country which lies off the west coast of England. It is normally worn with much pride as a symbol on St. Patrick's Day. This occasion falls on March 17th each year.

3. Shamrock Means "Summer Plant"

The name for the shamrock originates from the age-old Irish word "seamrog." This word is translated in some cases to mean "summer plant," which makes

sense because white clover is prolific in the summer months. You often see bees all over it. The name also comes from the Gaelic word meaning “little clover.”

4. Saint Patrick Used the Shamrock to Teach About the Holy Trinity

When Saint Patrick traveled over to Ireland in the fifth century and began preaching the word of God, there was a small problem. Unlike today, Christianity was traditionally spread around by word of mouth. Armed with this knowledge, this Saint is said to have used the shamrock and its distinctive three leaves to teach the people all about the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Saint Patrick showed the Irish people that while the parts of the Holy Trinity were each separate entities, they were also all connected together as well. It is the same with the shamrock because it has three separate leaves which grow and then branch out from one single stem. We still do not know for sure whether the connection between this Saint and the way that he is said to have taught with the clover is actually true. However, it is certainly a good story nonetheless. It does make sense that a three-leaf clover is a symbol of the Holy Trinity.

5. St. Patrick Made the Shamrock Famous

Eventually, this plant came to be regarded as something holy. It came to represent the teaching of the man turned Saint who had come to preach the word of God to all people. It is widely believed that Saint Patrick also suggested that the shamrock would offer a bit of luck. For these reasons and also



the religious connotations too, the symbol of this wonderful plant is often displayed proudly in Irish parades and celebrations. It is a plant and a symbol that is well loved by the people of this charming country.

6. The Shamrock Was a Symbol of Rebellion

The meaning of symbols can often change throughout history, and sometimes rather dramatically too. In the early 1900s, the shamrock became a symbol of rebellion of the Irish people against the English. As a symbol of rebellion, openly displaying this three-leaf clover was made illegal and punishable by death.

7. Shamrocks Were Important to Ancient Druids

This plant isn't just connected with Irish Christianity either. Druids are said to have thought that this three-leafed clover was actually a lucky charm to ward off any evil spirits. They also thought it was holy because the three leaves form what is called a triad, which was important to their beliefs.

This triad symbol is derived from the ancient and Pagan belief that earth and water are representative of a goddess. This goddess encompasses every stage of a woman's life: the Maiden, the Mother, and the Crone. The triad is a design of three interlocking and overlapping oblong shapes with a triangle in the middle. This is symbolic and stands for the goddess who embraces all three of these particular female entities.

8. Three Is a Symbolic and Special Number

The very concept of threes is vastly important in Celtic symbolism. Most Pagan religions regard the number three as being holy because of the numerous philosophies and states of being which can be applied to it. Positive, neutral and negative is one. Masculine, neutral, and feminine is another. Maiden, mother, and crone is yet another. Three is representative of luck in so many religions, specifically in Celtic Druidism, which predates Christianity by many thousands of years. So we can see why a plant that had three distinct leaves was going to be so important to faiths and religions where this number really stood for something.

9. The Shamrock Is Still Used in Weddings Today

Shamrocks are often placed as a lucky emblem and motif in the wedding bouquet of an Irish bride. This is an old custom and tradition that is still often followed today in modern weddings.

10. You Can Grow Your Own Shamrocks

The shamrock is said to be a fairly easy plant to grow, and you can get them as seeds or bulbs. If you plant these indoors around early January time, then you could get a nice little growth by the time St. Patrick's Day comes around in March.







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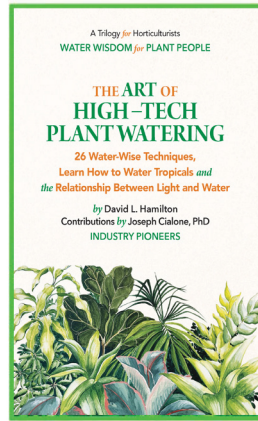
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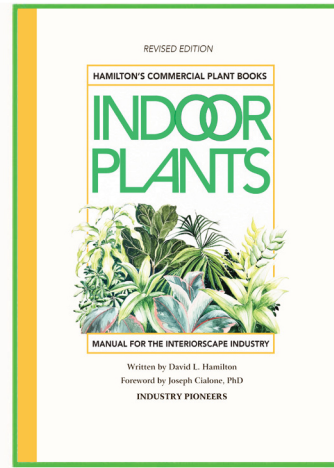
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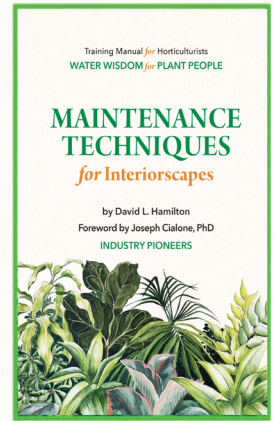
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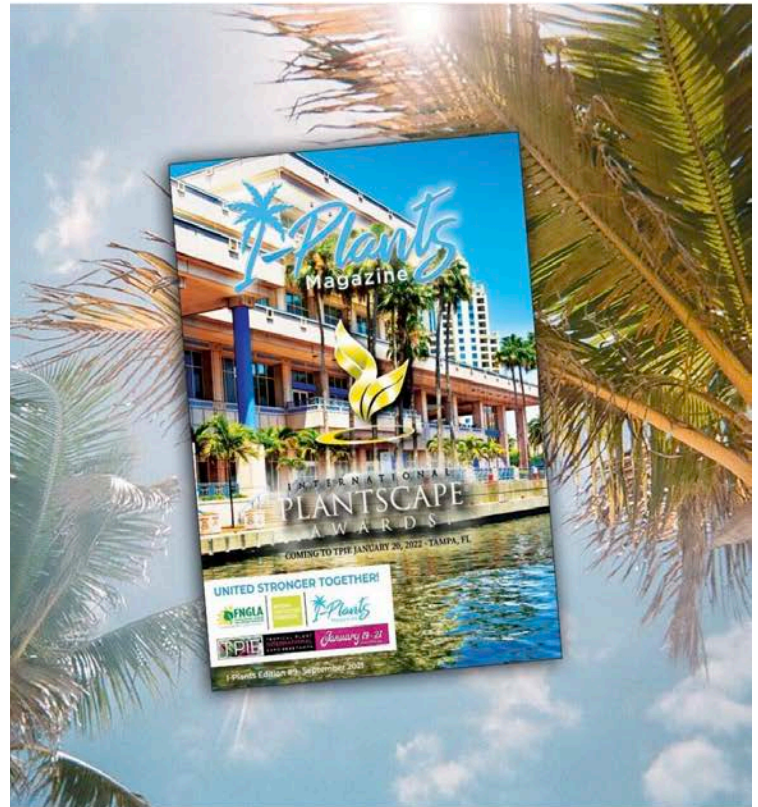


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