

ISGA Co-Locates with IAC; Call for CEA Articles; UK Inmate Training Program

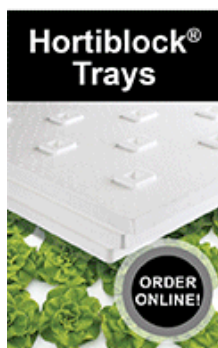
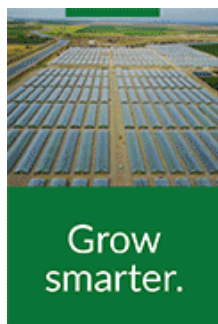


*Greenhouse vegetable news from GrowerTalks magazine*



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# inside GROWER

Controlled Environment Agriculture

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Sprout Growers Meeting  
Call for CEA Papers  
UK Training Grant  
Indoor Melon Intros  
New Harvesting Tech



## Ball Culture Guide

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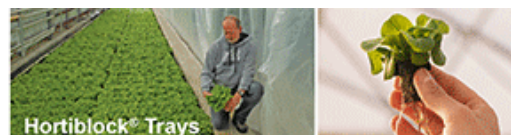
ISBN: 978-1-7332541-0-6

## International Sprout Growers Association Co-locates with Indoor Ag-Con



The [International Sprout Growers Association \(ISGA\)](#) has announced that they will be hosting their 33rd annual convention to coincide with [Indoor Ag-Con \(IAC\)](#) on March 11 and 12, 2025. Combined with the [CEA Alliance](#) and their annual meeting, IAC attendees can expect an even wider portfolio of sessions focusing on the current state of sprout production while ISGA members will be able to access IAC's expo floor with all its demonstrations and networking opportunities.

Early bird registration for IAC and its many facets ends on December 13, so make sure you [register](#) now and don't miss out on the special pricing!



## Call For CEA-Based Research Papers!

Frontiers in Plant Science has released a call for articles addressing different CEA-related topics within the realm of Modern Cultivation Techniques for Medicinal Plants: Impact on Yield and Secondary Metabolite Production, including:

- Hydroponic systems and their impact on yield and quality of medicinal plants
- Efficiency of resource management in controlled environment agriculture
- Effects of various hydroponic parameters on the chemical composition of plants
- Aeroponics and vertical farming: Innovations and outcomes

Citing increasing demand in the field of medicinal plant production and the inability of traditional production methods to keep up with that demand, the editors feel that novel cultivation methods such as those employed in CEA-based production can mitigate this risk through optimal resource use, resulting in increased yield and quality.

For more information about the call for articles and specifics about the research topics, visit the [Frontiers in Plant Science site](#).



## UK Grant to Train Female Prisoners in CEA

The University of Kentucky has gotten recent attention for their work teaching inmates from the nearby Kentucky Correctional Institute for Women all about greenhouse-based farming. Citing a need to help fill a gap in greenhouse tech workers and funded by a two-year, \$100,000 [AgriProspect](#) grant, 12 to 16 students at a time will learn more about what it takes to work in CEA, according to the local NPR affiliate.

While the program organizers Casey Byrd, UK Horticulture Extension, and Qiuglu Ying, UK assistant extension professor of horticulture, do not expect all graduates to end up in CEA-related jobs, they cite the therapeutic benefits horticultural work can have and note that these classes can be further replicated to help students in middle and high schools.

Having worked with inmate laborers myself during graduate school, I am highly supportive of programs like these and can't wait to see what's to come! More information about the program can be found in the original [NPR article](#).



## Indoor Melon Introductions

*Contributed by Jen Polanz*

We've reported in this space before about the greenhouse-grown melons that Pure Flavor came out with the past two years. This year at the Global Produce & Floral Show in Atlanta they had a third mini melon introduction in amora, which won Best Product Promo from the International Floral & Produce Association (IFPA). These are single-serving melons with vibrant colors and a sweet, juicy taste.



The Sunset brand has joined the fray in mini melons with its own new introduction, Kawaii, also offering a single serving with juicy sweetness. This melon variety hails from Japan, and they, too, are growing these melons in greenhouses in Mexico. It will be sold in 2-pack mesh bags or in bulk.



## New Harvesting Tech

*Contributed by Jen Polanz*

There was a ton of new tech there at the show, but I'm picking one to highlight that caught my eye: Four Growers is a startup from Pittsburgh that has a tomato-harvesting robot driven by AI called the GR-100. What's different about this robot versus others is the method for harvesting—instead of picking the fruit with a robotic “hand” it gently sucks it off the vine vacuum-style.

I talked to Sales Director Nick Boelen at the booth, who said it's as fast as a human and getting faster all the time. It has four cameras on each side that identifies the fruit to be picked and through machine learning knows which ones are ripe enough, and they are beta testing yield forecasting based on the imaging, as well. There are multiple nozzle sizes available depending on the crop. Currently there are prototypes in one Canadian grower and two Dutch growers, and he said they just closed on a new round of fundraising to continue to build machines.

The company also is developing a proof of concept for a cucumber harvesting machine that does use a 3-fingered “hand” along with a cutting device.



Stay curious, ask questions and let me know how it goes at [scampbell@ballpublishing.com](mailto:scampbell@ballpublishing.com).



Dr. Sean Campbell

Editor-at-Large

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