

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Large and in Charge

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With its second year of being called “Cultivate,” most people have stopped calling it “OFA.” But one thing that hasn’t changed is that this is still the premier, must-attend event.

According to AmericanHort, “the world” descended upon Columbus, Ohio, and that’s pretty spot on—about 10,000 people from more than 20 countries were represented, making it a fairly global show. With many other long-running events struggling to maintain their numbers, that speaks volumes about the work that AmericanHort has done to expand and improve the event.

The organizers have really given you a lot to see and do in four days, from tours and seminars to special events and displays. You really have to plan your time wisely.

As for the trade show, it was mobbed at all times except during lunch and maybe the last few hours on Tuesday. We didn’t hear a single exhibitor complain about traffic. One exhibitor told us that, while attendance was strong last year, they were looking, not buying. This year they were placing orders.

Last year, Cultivate’s retail area was in a separate area on another level of the convention center; this year it was in the back left corner of the hall. While it was much more accessible to attendees, we still got some feedback from retailers that they weren’t happy with the retail-oriented displays or amount of retail-oriented education. Like it or not, Cultivate is first and foremost a grower show.

As for new products? Loads, in both livegoods and hardgoods. We didn’t spot anything that will change the world, but a few will certainly improve it.



Peace, Love and Waves

The new Wavy Gravy Farfugium (the name is a nod to a well-known peace activist) from Lloyd Traven and Peace Tree Farms is a unique tender perennial (think USDA Zone 7) with textured, wavy foliage. It prefers the shade and has multiple uses, including containers, beds and as a filler in cut flower bouquets.

Show Your Team Pride

One of the booths that was creating a buzz included logos and colors from some popular NFL teams. Cort Smith's licensing venture—called Sporticulture—features everything from pots and POP that promote your favorite football team. (Cort calls it “teamscaping.”) And the program is simple: the grower gets to pick whatever crop he/she wants to put in the licensed pots, which also come with tags, that best represents their home team colors. This way, you can charge a premium price even for commodity crops like mums. They're also looking at other gardening-related items like hoses, kneeling pads and watering cans.

Also seen in the Sporticulture booth was Joseph Gannascoli, who played Vito on “The Sopranos.” Joe was promoting his licensed Bottle Skinz for propane tanks, buckets and water bottles.



Keep It Clean

As their company name suggests, BioSafe specializes in environmentally friendly fungicides, insecticides and sanitation products. Their newest product, called TerraGrow, is the first beneficial soil inoculant on the market, using beneficial bacteria, fungal spores and nutrients to nurse your soil back to health after it's been through a few fungicide treatments. Since TerraGrow is water-soluble, BioSafe suggests using it with their

TerraClean 5.0 bactericide/fungicide to help clean your irrigation system while you're cleaning your growing media.

More Than a Mat

Okay, we know what you're thinking: "Yeah, I've seen capillary mats before," and we said the same thing. But what makes this one different is that it actually moves the water through the mat—quickly so that there's not as much algae buildup, but enough to keep the plants sitting on top of it well-hydrated. It hooks right up to a regular hose and fills the mat in about three or four minutes without over or under-watering. The key is the proprietary blend of the geo-textile capillary fabric, which wicks water evenly across the mat.

Not only does it save on labor because you don't need someone to water, but the good folks at WaterPulse estimate that it offers a 70% water savings. They had an interesting graphic illustrating that a garden center can use up to 4,000 gal. of water per day, which is equal to about 24 above-ground swimming pools.

Right before Cultivate, WaterPulse announced that its irrigation mats were going in 3,700 Walmart stores in time for the heat of summer.

Easy-Peasy

There are a couple of key difficulties when it comes to bulbs and the consumer: how deep to plant it, what it looks like when it blooms and the time it takes to plant a ton of bulbs for a big show. Easy Bloom Pad, which we first saw at IPM Essen in January, aims to take away those challenges. Invented by Jan van der Sman, the set of five bulbs comes inside a biodegradable paper pad that reduces planting time and results in blocks of color. Now that a machine has been created specifically to produce these beauties, there will be 29 selections available in the U.S. this fall. "We do not see this as a replacement for bulbs, but we see it as a hopeful introduction to bulbs to the new customer," says Pieter van der Lans, whose company 2 Plant International, along with Garden World of Minnesota, is the parent company of Bloompad North America.



Stirring the Pot ... Um, Bucket

Dramm's new Agitation/Aeration Bucket keeps fertilizers, fungicides, insecticides and PGRs in suspension with a pump that's built in to the bottom of a 5-gal. bucket. And if you're using beneficial nematodes, you can flip the switch to "Aerate" so that they get plenty of oxygen and won't settle at the bottom. Available as a 120V AC and a 12V DC.

Dramm has also upgraded their Mist Time misting controller to include a temperature sensor that you can set at start and end temps in six different blocks of time, if you choose. It now also features a touchpad instead of a dial for easier programming.



Smart Designs

Last year, Pride Garden Products introduced colorful print hanging basket liners that incorporated the AquaSav Smart Coco liner inside it. This year, Pride took it one step further with the Marrakesh style wall planter (shown), hanging basket and bowls. These new additions all include the AquaSav Smart Coco liner, which helps to keep the soil moist for a longer period of time. This continues Pride's streak of coming up with new ways to help retailers improve the value of baskets, containers and wall plantings.

Save Money on Your CSA

If you have a CSA, farmers market or sell produce (or you're thinking of starting), the new CropBox from Adaptive Plastics is an earth-friendly solution for distributing produce and then reusing the box. One challenge with produce is the boxes don't last very long, creating an added expense. Made of sealed flute corrugated plastic, this material is easy to clean and sanitize, lightweight, can hold a significant amount of weight (75 lbs. for the half-bushel and 100 lbs. for the three-quarter bushel) and keeps produce fresh with insulated plastic. It's impervious to moisture and growers are finding they're getting 150 turns per box. The boxes are made in the U.S.A.

Pop It Up

This might be the most unique item that we came across at Cultivate. It's a pop-up box made of recycled milk carton material, which means it's water resistant and recyclable. It holds two plants, which can be watered right in the pop-up box, since once it pops up it's sealed. There are 12 designs available, including birthday, Mother's Day, 4th of July, Get Well and more. According to Shai Bracha, vice president of business development at Pop Up Planter, designs also can be customized depending on the size of the order. Here's another unique twist: it comes with a card that has a QR code on it. You scan it with your phone, then record a video. Include the card with the gift and the recipient can scan the code to retrieve your video.



Showerpots

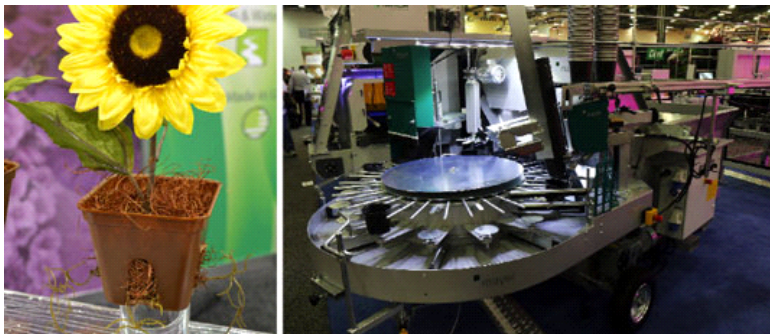
We always like to stop by the Very Cool Stuff booth because they're always coming up with some, well, you know, the company name. Last year, they had these solar lights for hanging baskets. This year, they had the Flower Shower planters, which are simply a shower head coming over the back of a colorful metal planter. They come in eight different colors. It's a fun planter that would mix well with the watering can planters that have become rather popular lately.

Rustic Yet Chic

A-ROO Company introduced the Provincial collection at the show, which is a series of pot covers that feature an ornate embossed pattern and are highlighted with a metallic silver or gold patina for an aged appearance, all on a plastic cover. The series is available in Classic Marsala, Jade, Graphite and Bisque in 4-in., 4.5-in., 6-in. and 6.5-in. They would dress up any potted plant, succulent or even a bedding plant given as a gift.

Ship It Safely

The Clone Shipper (sounds like something out of a sci-fi novel, doesn't it?) isn't for your everyday bedding plant shipments. This is for rather expensive items that cannot afford to arrive in poor shape. Its patented design includes an LED light, a foam "puck" to hold the stem in place and prevent soil spillage, and a locking system to keep the pieces together. It's designed for aquatic plants, regular plants and even coral. Investor Leaster Gibson noted they had a shipment from Arizona to the United Kingdom that got stuck in customs for 10 days and the plants still arrived in great shape.



Pots From Plants

Growers and retailers looking for an eco-friendly grow pot have a new option with SelfEco, a container made from plant-based polymer. That means there's no petroleum used—instead it's made from corn byproducts. The 4-in. square and 3-in. round containers are designed with "flaps"

that pop out to allow roots to grow when the entire pot and plant are planted in the ground. President Danny Mishek says the roots become stronger because they gain nutrients from the pot itself. The company also has a smaller "sleeve"-style product for plants coming out of packs, as well as a bulb basket. All products are made in the USA and are compostable.

Visser & Mayer

Visser NA, which markets its Dutch-made transplanters, seeders and other high-end greenhouse automation, announced that it has partnered with Mayer, a German manufacturer of pot fillers and handlers, to distribute Mayer products in North America. The two product lines complement one another, with Mayer filling the pots and Visser planting them. One example is the Mayer 1010, which can fill up to 4,000 pots per hour in sizes from 4 in. to 12 in.

Retailers' Choice Awards

This was the second year for the Retailers' Choice Awards, which are new or "that's new to me" products chosen by The Garden Center Group's Danny Summers, industry consultant Sid Raisch and a contingent of retailers. Here are the 10 products that caught the retailers' attention:



Underpants for Your Plants

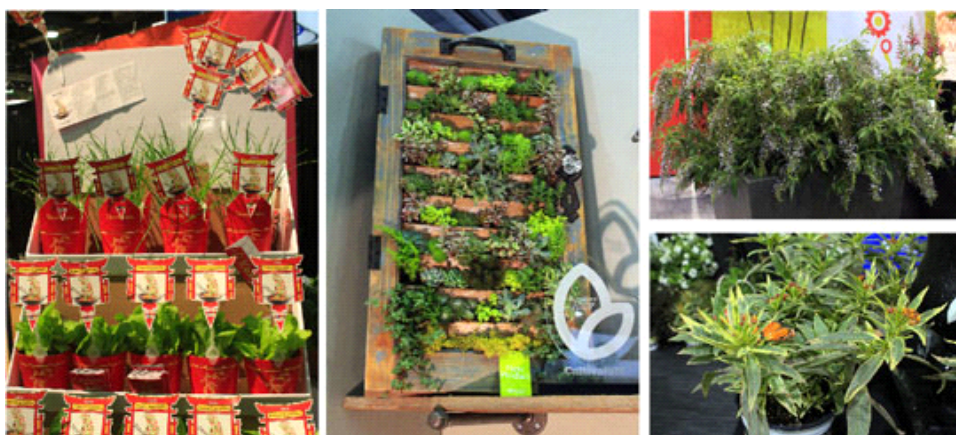
The cheeky tagline refers to the design of Bloem LLC's Bloembagz. These are actually foldable fabric pots that Bloem says are made keeping in mind the science of a smarter planter: durable handles; made from recycled water bottles; double-walled construction; smartly placed water holes and eight very attractive colors. Plus, they have a number of sizes and styles—even one with a door through which you can harvest your potatoes!

Barrel Art

From Le Primitif Galleries, these metallic works are created by Haitian artisans using 50-gal. oil drums. Le Primitif buys these artworks from about 25 artists who are employing up to 800 Haitian craftspeople to make the designs. The art speaks to the Haitian culture and the messages often convey their traditions, many of which are perfect for the garden. Stunning stuff.

Succulents Go to the Zoo

One of the first items the Ball Publishing crew noticed on the show floor while setting up was this line of succulents planted in zoo-themed planters from Theuts Flower Farm. Even though these adorable creatures are bigger than your typical impulse item, these are definitely one of those irresistible "Mommy, I must" purchases. Theuts also has a new Christmas line, which is a great way to extend the season for succulents.



Power of Packaging

American Takii's concept for promoting Asian veggies uses elegantly decorated Chinese takeout containers and POP materials. We saw these during Spring Trials and loved the idea! Can retailers make it work for

them?

Hanging In Style

Braun Horticulture's vertical shutter lets plants hang out in style. Plant it up and you've got a lovely living work of art for a wall or fence.

Consider the Cascade

Cultivaris' Buddleia Wisteria Lane was recognized for the powerful punch this plant provides in just a 2-ft. tall bush. Just look how densely packed with blooms it is—and in a weeping form. Great for a container and a no-brainer for butterflies.

Mighty Monarch

Hort Couture's Asclepias Monarch Promise is another no-brainer for butterflies. This tender perennial butterfly weed has variegated foliage and gorgeous blooms. Bred by an amateur butterfly breeder in Florida—imagine that!



Blooms with Some Bam!

Nothing was quite as stunning as the beautiful blooms on Plants Nouveau's Hydrangea macrophila Noblesse. A lovely white head in summer, the big, green-edged petals turn a bluish-purple in fall. Both versions of the flowers are lovely!

The Name Says it All

We liked Proven Winners' Calibrachoa Holy Moly during Spring Trials—and the Retailers' Choice folks agree that it's a beauty. There's something about its yellow and red color configuration that reminds us of a box of circus popcorn.

Check Out These Chicks

Willoway Nurseries' ChickCharms Hens and Chicks is a collection of more than 20 succulent varieties with the cutest chick-inspired tags and POP. New varieties added to the line each year will be called "hatchlings." What we liked most about it was the barn display, which retailers can recreate on their own and have some fun doing so. **GT**