

# GROWERTALKS

## Cover Story

5/1/2020

## Grow These, Sell, Repeat

Jennifer Zurko



Succulents continue to be one of the most popular houseplants.



Easy-care air plants make the perfect finishing touches to indoor décor.



A houseplant combo with a fiddle-leaf fig as the centerpiece.



Along with monstera, *Pilea peperomioides* (Chinese money plant) has exploded in popularity on social media.



ZZ plant (front) and snake plant (back).

If you're a regular on Instagram, or have customers that are, you know that indoor plants are one of the hottest decorative trends. It's hard to figure out the right varieties to grow—especially since availability of the popular ones can be hard to come by and many houseplants have long crop times.

To help steer you the right way, and away from jumping onto the next possibly short-lived fad, we've asked a handful of suppliers and growers what they're growing and selling for the houseplant segment.

### Popular Houseplants

(in no particular order):

Sansevieria (snake plant)

Calathea (cathedral plant)

*Ficus lyrata* (fiddle-leaf fig)

*Ficus elastica* (rubber plant)

*Zamioculcus zamifolia* (ZZ plant)

*Peperomia piperaceae* (radiator plant)

Succulents (various)

Aglaonema (Chinese evergreen)

*Dracaena reflexa* (song of India)

*Senecio peregrinus* (string of dolphins)

Other aroids (like alocasia, anthurium, monstera, philodendron, etc.)

Crotons

*Spathiphyllum* (peace lily)

*Pilea peperomioides* (Chinese money plant)

Pothos (devil's ivy)

Tillandsia (air plant)

Ferns (rabbit foot, maidenhair, etc.)

Maranta (prayer plant)

Sources: AgriStarts, Costa Farms, ForemostCo, GrowIt!, Nature's Way Miami



Aglaonema



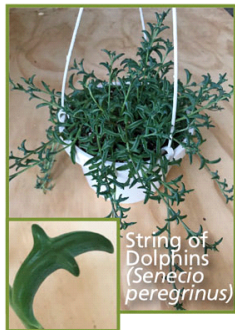
Calathea



Maidenhair fern



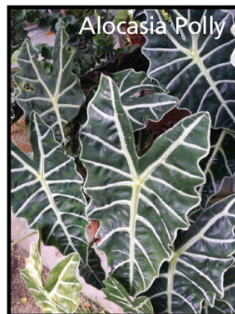
Maranta



String of Dolphins (Senecio peregrinus)



ZZ Plant (Zamioculcus zamifolia)



Alocasia Polly



Anthurium

## Novelties

Gary Hunter of Gary's Specialty Plants in Drumore, Pennsylvania, said their top-selling houseplant for 2019 was *Senecio peregrinus*. Commonly known as String of Dolphins because the shape of the foliage looks like little diving dolphins, Gary said they sold over 10,000 plants in several different sizes at premium prices, primarily through customers who sell nationally online. Why did they sell so much?

"The novelty," stated Gary. "Dolphins have replaced Chinese Money Plant (*Pilea peperomioides*), which have come down in price, but we still sell every week."

Another plant that's exploded on the social media scene is ZZ Plant (*Zamioculcus zamifolia*). Marta Maria Garcia from Nature's Way Miami said that it's become "VERY

POPULAR" (her emphasis) and is in her top three houseplants. (The other two are sansevieria and fiddle leaf fig.)

## Aroids

Back in January, Chris Beytes and Ellen Wells reported from the Tropical Plant International Exposition that aroids were one of the most popular plants displayed and topics discussed in booths at the trade show. Aroids is the umbrella name for plants in the Araceae family, which includes philodendron, monstera, aglaonema, alocasia, pothos and hundreds more.

Ty Strode, president of AgriStarts in Apopka, Florida, said that they're getting a great deal of interest in the aroids in their lineup, especially the alocasia and foliage anthuriums.

"Other oddball low-light plants are of interest as well, such as the *Pilea peperomioides*," said Ty. "Many of these items in demand now we could hardly give away 10 years ago. It's pretty wild and great that they are making a resurgence."



## For a splash of color

One doesn't have to live on green houseplants alone—there are plenty of indoor varieties that have lovely and colorful blooms. Orchids are a traditional favorite, as are anthuriums and spathiphyllum. But for something a little different, why not try Angel Wing Begonias?

"It's personally one of my favorites," said Marta. "It's a great plant and not a lot of growers are growing it."

There are also hydrangeas that are becoming more popular as a houseplant as more indoor types become

more readily available.

And there are always the old reliables, like African violets, which Dr. Janna Beckerman, professor at Purdue University, said are under-appreciated and under-utilized.

"They flower themselves silly, they tolerate low light and low humidity, and they come in a dazzling array of colors," she said. "And, lastly, they remind me of my grandmother, who had a number of them." **GT**