

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Hot New Picks From the Garden Center Show

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Milwaukee: The city of Harley-Davidson, Pabst Blue Ribbon, “Laverne & Shirley” and now the Garden Center Show. That’s the new retail trade show that just launched in August. The first edition should have been last year, but the lingering effects of the pandemic caused them to delay until 2022. We, with Hortistician Dr. Marvin Miller, made the hour and 45-minute drive up there to check it out.

This new event is produced by SmartWork Media, a publishing company out of Montclair, New Jersey. SmartWork isn’t in the garden center industry in any way other than this new show; their print publications cover the fields of digital printing, jewelry retailers, optical retailers, pet retailers, screen printing, retail design and sign-making professionals. With retail and pets, we guess there’s a connection to L&G ...

Note that this event is NOT a remake of the former IGC Show founded in 2007 by Jeff and Cheryl Morey. That show closed after a successful run at Chicago’s Navy Pier, then one year at McCormick Place, and then the pandemic hit. There’s been no explanation as to why it wasn’t brought back, but two years is a long time to survive without holding an event.

The Garden Center Show website does acknowledge the IGC Show, with CEO Matthijs Braakman saying, “The permanent closure of the IGC Show created a void in the garden center industry. So we reached out to previous IGC Show Director Rob Bailey to see if SmartWork Media could step in and fill that void and the result is a brand new—under completely different ownership—show for independent garden centers.”

How Was the Show?

The Wisconsin Center is a beautiful venue, but the show didn’t require much of its 188,695 sq. ft. There were 7 1/2 aisles, generously spread out, accommodating about 100 booths total. In IGC Show terms, it was about like walking maybe three or four aisles of that giant show. It took us just 2 1/2 hours to see everyone we wanted to and that was taking our time.

Still, don’t be fooled by the small size! The mix of exhibitors was a nice surprise and also much like the old IGC show: POS systems, garden décor of every stripe, home décor, garden and indoor plants, prepared foods, pet toys, garden tools and supplies, pest control products, decorative containers, statuary, and more. We found at least a dozen new things to write about—a good haul for such a small show. In fact, being small, we were able to linger and learn more about companies than we normally would and that sometimes led to uncovering a new product they didn’t have front-and-center.

Attendance may have been meager by IGC Show standards (which drew more than 6,000 to Chicago at its peak), but exhibitors didn't seem to mind. Many expressed pleasure at the people they were seeing and the business they were writing, and they seemed inclined to want to return next year and support the growth of this new event that's exclusively for garden center retailers.

Integrated Store Systems

This point-of-sale company has been servicing restaurants and grocery stores for more than 30 years; they say they were the first to develop touch POS software back in the 1980s. What they were highlighting at the show is their new mobile printer, which can hook onto a belt, allowing you to print a receipt from anywhere. We've been noticing more IGCs utilizing mobile POS systems during peak times, especially if they don't have a lot of room around their regular cash-wrap area. They also sell hand-held scanners and tablets that feature hot-swappable batteries—never worry about losing scan data during busy times!

Roeda

Carol Roeda started creating metal art as a hobby 25 years ago, and for the last 15 years she's been selling metal magnets as indoor and outdoor décor full time with the help of her daughter, Amy, who was staffing their booth. Products range from small refrigerator magnets to large door wreaths and garden stakes, so there's a wide price range. A key feature is that decorative pieces can be switched out for different seasons or holidays—buy one stake or wreath and use it year-round by changing the magnetic pieces decorating it.

Belvedere Marketing

As more states and municipalities enact plastic bag bans, reusable totes are in high demand. Belvedere can customize your bags with your company logo, photos, etc. They come in a variety of sizes and the minimum order is 5,000.

Marshall Home & Garden

The Adopt-A-Puppy display of resin pooches was what caught our eye because we're suckers for cute animal stuff, but it was hard to miss Marshall's booth with all of the colorful spinners and garden décor. There are 12 different breeds in the Adopt-A-Puppy program and you get one or two of each breed, along with the "adopt a puppy" display box. Marshall introduced it a few years ago and Dave Schemenauer says it's one of their most popular packages.

Their spinners and motion décor are also extremely popular and are a category that Dave says they take very seriously. Marshall does all of its own design work and every piece is balanced, colorful and UV-coated so those bright colors don't fade. Dave adds retailers use them across the front of their property to attract passers-by.

Steel Dog

Do you have that dog that destroys every stuffy toy to get to the squeaker inside? Steel Dog designs its toys with a surprise inside for further fun and enrichment for every canine toy assassin. It could be more than one squeaker, a ball or another, smaller stuffy. Our favorite was the Thanksgiving turkey, which has a slice of pumpkin pie and a dog-safe ball inside, plus rope pull-toy drumsticks. You can find Steel Dog on Facebook and Instagram.

Burton & Ball

A new category for this company that typically offers gardening accessories is a line of pots and containers from Dutch company Capi, which asked B&B if they would like to be their North American distributor. CO2-neutral and made from completely recycled plastic, the planters come in four different styles of simple, sleek and textured designs. There also are two different sizes of watering cans.

Mossify

The Mossify boys, originator of the Mossify mister USB rechargeable plant mister and the Bendable Moss Pole and Coir Pole, have continued their development of unusual plant supports with a line of powder-coated metal trellises. The quirky, hip shapes are called "Tetris," "Plant Stairs," "Check Mark," "M" and "Oval." Also shown are new wooden trellises called "Tropical Squares." That's Mossify's Aidan Endre staffing their booth. Oh, and as a reminder, for every order, Mossify plants a tree with One Tree Planted.

Lift Kit

Those tall decorative planters are great, but what if you want to drop a smaller container inside to avoid all that soil and planting work? The Lift Kit planter inserts offer a way for homeowners to get the perfect plant height in any size container, outdoors or indoors, without using soil or rocks. The height-adjustable inserts are easy to assemble and come in four sizes.

Simplay3

From the founder of Little Tikes and Step2 kids toys, Simplay3 is a new company (his third) that also features plastic, interactive kids play systems. New is the Seed to Sprout Raised Garden table. Made in the USA from rotation-molded plastic, it features holes in the bottom to hold Dixie cups with seedlings and trellises for vining plants. It also comes with kid-sized gardening tools. They also have the Seed to Sprout Slide and Store 2-Level Garden Planter that's a plastic version of a two-tiered raised bed that can slide in and out. simplay3.com GP



