

GROWERTALKS

Cover Story

3/1/2023

Filling Their Carts With New Products

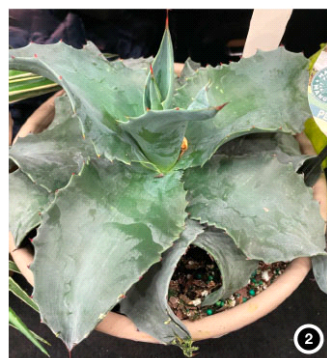
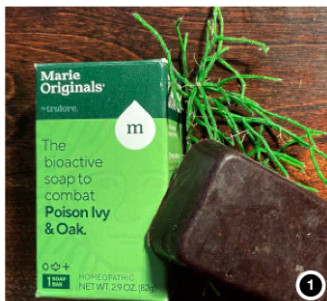
Chris Beytes, Ellen C. Wells, Matthew Chappell & Jennifer Polanz

The Ball Publishing team was out en force this winter, traveling all over the country (and out of the country) to find the newest products to share with you, our friends in the business. From Baltimore to Atlanta, Tampa to Essen (Germany), we've hit the big shows this winter and talked to lots of growers, manufacturers and retailers.

What are we hearing? The mood is cautiously optimistic and shows were well attended. Shipping from overseas is normalizing, and barring any unusual circumstances, is expected to stay steady this spring. All good news, as long as the weather cooperates during the peak selling season (a big "if").

The 2023 Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) welcomed more than 11,000 attendees from 42 states and 14 foreign countries for the three-day event at the Baltimore Convention Center. A sold-out trade show floor showcased more than 900 exhibiting companies in more than 1,530 booths. A few fun stats provided by organizers:

- More than 84.5% of MANTS attendees identified as either the final decision-makers or those who influence their companies' purchasing decisions
- More than 76.3% are categorized as owners, vice presidents, managers, buyers, or sales and marketing professionals
- More than half of this year's exhibitors had already renewed their exhibit space for the 2024 show



1 | Marie Originals Poison Ivy & Oak Soap

Marie Originals, a company based out of Pearl River, New York, has for several years been picking up steam in the area of natural therapeutics/bioactives. This company gets our award for best giveaway (a bar of their Poison Ivy & Oak Soap) and they were also very personable.

The Poison Ivy & Oak Soap contains all plant-based ingredients with the exception of a clay that helps dry up the blisters. Based upon reviews online, this product seems to work extremely well at both preventing symptoms when exposed to poison ivy and oak, as well as treating symptoms after they've flared up.

marieoriginals.com

2-3 | Mangave Newbies

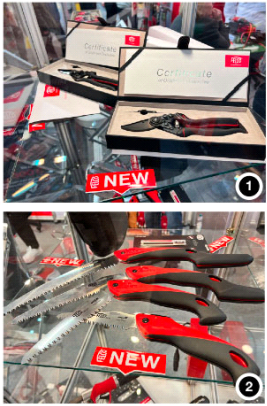
Walters Gardens continues the parade of super-cool Mangave (hybrids between the genus *Manfreda* and *Agave*) cultivars in 2023 with two newbies.

The first, Permanent Wave, has a bit of an *Agave parryi* look to it. Somewhat short and stout, it reaches a height of 20 in. with a 3-ft. spread. We really liked the look of this one, as it's got some substance in the landscape and would contrast well with many perennial border plants having chartreuse foliage and/or white-to-pastel flower colors.

The other new Mangave cultivar is Wiggling Out, which closely resembles the previously released cultivar Bad Hair Day with the exception that it's variegated. With 10-in. height and 20-in. width, it makes a great border plant or container plant. Very versatile in the landscape. waltersgardens.com

IPM Essen

The last IPM Essen to be held was January 2020, right before the global pandemic hit, so the mood at this year's IPM, held January 24-27, was exceptionally cheerful in spite of the gloomy news facing Europe—war, inflation, energy prices, labor and so on. Still, while buoyant, the industry approach to Spring 2023 seems to be “careful”—at least that was the word we heard most often in relation to how growers and retailers are approaching growing and purchasing. But you wouldn't know it in the garden centers; we visited two in the Netherlands on our way to and from Germany from Amsterdam and they were stocked full and doing a solid January business. IPM is less of a retail show than it was when Green Profit first started attending in the early 2000s. Still, we managed to find some retailer-worthy items to share with you:

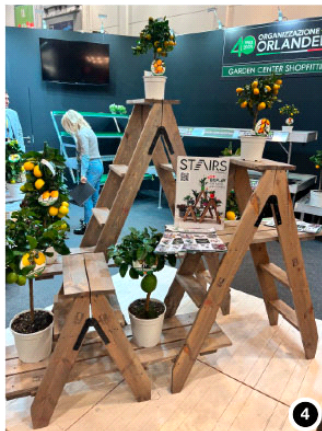


1-2 | felco

Some folks love their Felcos, so much they get tattoos of them—with flames. That's the likely customer for these “Premium Special Edition” Felcos, done in a special black chrome and anodized finish with fine leather grips with red stitching. They come in No. 6 and No. 8 models, and retail for a reasonable \$250. Also from Felco, four new folding pruning saws, plus three new long-handled loppers (70, 80 and 90 cm) and their first hedge trimmers. felco.com/en_us

3 | Green: The new gray?

Not a product ... but many products, starting with containers, which we always study closely to suss out the coming color trends in Europe. Black, white, gray and terracotta remain timeless; this season, green in every shade seemed to be the prominent color to pair with those classics. This display is from pottery company Ter Steege. That trend is supported by our domestic furniture industry; a recent Furniture Today article stated, “Green is the new gray,” with one designer saying, “I believe that green is having a moment right now because of its inextricable and often subconscious association with nature.” Amen! Add to that metallics of all types. And textures. Definitely in.



4 | Orlandelli

Stairs: That's what the Italian garden center fixture company calls their new rustic retail display system, which looks just like stepladders. This was their first showing of the prototype, but based on how often we see vintage ladders used for displays, we don't see why it wouldn't catch on—only, don't try climbing them! orlandelli.us

5 | Van Der starre

What are people buying when they buy a fruiting plant? The plant? Or the promise of jams and jellies and other tasty treats? We say it's the latter, which is why we like the tags on Van Der Starre's berry plants. The gingham and twine and “100% homemade” speak volumes to the end consumer. And there's plenty of space on the back for the necessary cultural information. By the way, those unusual pots are called “Wave2” pots and are said to be 20% more space efficient. Visit Van Der

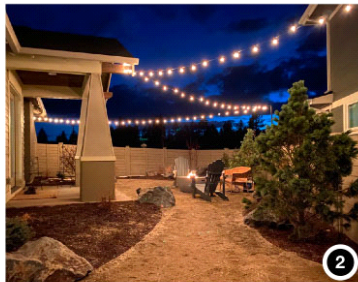
Starre's website to see a whole raft of retail ideas. starre.nl

6 | heije baumschulen

This shrub concept intrigued us. We couldn't at first tell why it was called “Three Sisters.” Are they three different shrubs that go well together? No, actually, it's three colors of the same shrub planted in one pot—think multi-color liners for shrubs. Produced by Heije Baumschulen, a grower in northern Germany, the Three Sisters program currently offers agapanthus, lilac, azalea, hydrangea and clematis. This would be fairly easy to duplicate at your own

Atlanta Market

A couple of things to note about the Atlanta Market before we jump into new products: There were more than 50 new showrooms dedicated to casual and outdoor furniture in anticipation of hosting the International Casual Furnishings Association (ICFA) Casual Market Atlanta July 10-13. The show takes the place of the one that usually runs in Chicago. We headed down to those floors and some companies were already moved in while others were in the process. Some of those moves freed up some space up in The Gardens (Building 2, Floors 9 & 10), which is on tap for a renovation. The timeline for that is still TBD.



1 | Burgon & Ball

What caught Jen's eye at Burgon & Ball is exactly the point of the product: the new line of FLORAbrite tools and accessories are made in bright, eye-catching colors designed to allow gardeners to easily spot them in the grass, mulch or soil. Have you ever been trimming or digging and had to stop to look around for your trowel or pruners? These products, all endorsed by the Royal Horticultural Society and guaranteed for 10 years, will stand out easily. They meet the same rigorous standard as the traditional B&B products, but are dipped in fluorescent coating. The display comes with purchase of the products and it all ships out of Michigan. burgonandballusa.com

2-3 | Allsop Garden

Though not on display in Atlanta, Marketing Manager David Brewin explained the new acquisition of IYN Pole Stands. People love to create ambiance on their patios, decks and other spaces with string lights, and this system is an easy way to do that, with durable, powder-coated steel poles. There are three products: poles that stand on a tank base; poles that mount to the patio/deck surface (pictured); and poles that can be mounted to a fence or patio rail. In each setup, two poles click together easily to create height and the lights secure to the tops of the poles with a carabiner clip, making setup easy and fast. There are two types of LED string lights available through Allsop, one with gold accents and another with black. allsopgarden.com



4-5 | Bacon Products Corp.

This product stopped Jen in her tracks walking by the booth because of the colorful NCAA licensed hummingbird feeders. If there are two things her family loves, it's feeding hummingbirds and Ohio State football. Bacon Products has licensed several Division I schools through its Hummer's Galore line of feeders and continue to add more. Each design, which features a front and back image, is UV-resistant and shrink-wrapped onto 32-ounce heavy glass nectar bottles. There are also designs honoring branches of the military, as well as floral designs. The company offers accessories like ant moats, cleaning brushes, bee guards and all-natural nectar (no preservatives or artificial color added). All products are Made in the USA.

hummersgalore.com

6 | Stonewall Kitchen

Many garden retailers carry Stonewall Kitchen products,

so we always try to stop in to the showroom in Atlanta to see what's new. These new drink mixers from the Tillen Farms drinks segment can be incorporated into both gourmet food and also tied into plant sales based on their fruit or herb counterparts. New for this year are Blueberry & Lemon Shrub and Strawberry & Mint Shrub mixers. All USDA-certified organic, these mixers can make cocktails or mocktails (which are all the rage right now).

stonewallkitchen.com

7 | Jackson Pottery

There were lots of new items to peruse at Jackson Pottery's showroom, including this pallet option of Kairos Coin Planter in three colors. From Northern China, these pots are fired clay and glazed, making them frost-resistant and durable, with a lovely textured pattern. Retailers get five sets of each color in an assortment of sizes of blue, turquoise and beige. jacksonpottery.com

TPIE

Attendance and the atmosphere for the 2023 edition of the Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE) were on par with pre-pandemic versions of the yearly event celebrating all things tropical within the horticulture industry. Roughly 6,500 people were in attendance for the 50th anniversary of the premier tropical plants event, which was about 500 more than the year before.

With this being the final year for TPIE being held in Tampa, Florida, the event heads back to Ft. Lauderdale for 2024, where an enlarged and enlivened Broward County Convention Center awaits to bring even more foliage enthusiasts together.



1 | Sol Soils

Friends John Porter and Travis Thein were disappointed in the houseplant potting mixes available at box stores and decided to create their own. They sourced all their products from the U.S. and made sure all components were all-natural and peat-free. The result is a line of five different mixes for specific houseplant applications: cacti, orchids, houseplants, succulents and bonsai. The five mixes are designed to be fast-draining to prevent root rot, which they say is the No. 1 cause of houseplant deaths. And for houseplant fanatics like themselves who want to customize their

own mixes, all of the elements in these mixes are also sold separately.

John and Travis also developed a line of soil toppers, or small decorative stones, that can be layered onto a houseplant's soil surface. These soil toppers are available in four different colors. solsoils.com

2 | Flourish Plant

The two women behind Flourish Plant are exactly what's exciting about being in horticulture in the 2020s. Like other new entrepreneurs entering the biz, Kate Ferguson and Lila Sullivan are exuberant, hardworking, full of grit and passionate about how they can contribute. The two met as (self-proclaimed) science geeks competing against each other in high school science fairs (national level!). They're now business partners offering a plant food product they felt was missing in the market: Something organic, made from waste ingredients, doesn't stink and sold in sizes that don't take up a ton of space in today's small-space apartments.

The result is Flourish Plant, a plant food derived from commercial fishing waste, packaged in small containers and meant to be prepared in small batches. A pinch of peppermint oil cuts the fishy smell. And these science geeks put a lot of science into the bottles, too, creating a formulation that includes macro- and micro-nutrients, as well as soil microbes. It's also available in soy sauce-sized packets that can be used as samplers.

flourishplant.com



3-4 | Big Grass Living

Houseplants can have fancy and colorful swirls on their leaves—why not do the same for the pots they’re displayed in? Two new pots from Big Grass Living are the closest things to “variegation” on a pot that we’ve seen. Because each planter is handcrafted individually, the patterns on the pots are unique. The swirled patterns of the Gobi planter are created by dipping then spinning each planter by hand. The Dune planters’ textured surface are created by hand carving each indentation, while the color contrast is formed by hand dipping (no spinning!). biggrassliving.com

5 | leafjoy’s H2O Collection

Last year, Proven Winners entered the houseplant market in conjunction with The Plant Company with their leafjoy line of houseplants. This year, they’re expanding with some more and varied designs with their H2O Collection. The H2O Shenandoah pairs the look of colored and textured vintage Depression-era bottles with hydroponically growing plants. H2O Elkhorn Lake pairs houseplant cuttings in globe-style jars held on a tilted axis. And the H2O Skiffes Creek features wire frames cleanly and artfully holding clear-glass jars with hydroponically grown plants. Each structure is artful, yet doesn’t distract from the beauty of the growing houseplant.



provenwinners.com GP