

Live (almost) from the Tropical Plant International Expo



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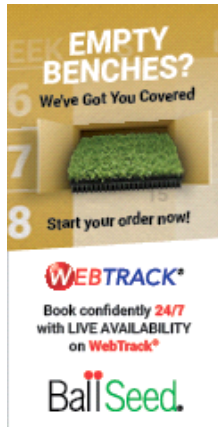
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# GrowerTalks' Acres Online

News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

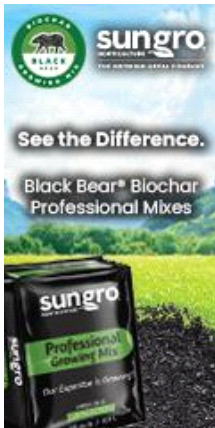
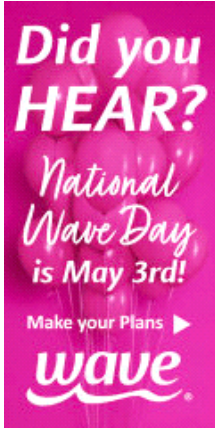
- Live (sorta) from Tampa
- The TPIE Keynote
- On the trade show floor
- Some cool plants
- LiveTrends' latest
- Costa never disappoints
- Inverde by Express Seed
- Happiness abounds
- Spotted: Bros with Hoes



**NEW FOR 2027**

**PW**  
PROVEN WINNERS

Live (almost) from TPIE in Tampa

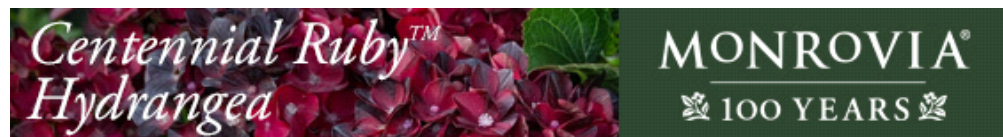


I say almost because by the time you read this, they might be sweeping up the foliage dust from the convention center floor. But from January 18 to 20, the Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE) was THE horticultural place to be. I've heard no final numbers, but initial registration was 6,500 excited plantspeople from 48 states and 44 countries in town to shop for goods and services from nearly 400 vendors. Not record attendance, but in this day and age it's not about breaking records, it's about "elevating expectations" (TPIE's theme) and I think they exceeded expectations.



I spoke with numerous exhibitors near the end of Days 1 and 2 and 100% of them were smiling and enthusiastic about the crowds, the mood and the amount of business being conducted. I heard the term "cautiously optimistic" once or twice, but I'd say the overall mood was a notch or two better than that. Growers who'd been holding off on placing orders were finally calling to book; some growers were already sold out of certain high-demand product lines; and expectations are that, if the weather breaks in our favor, there's no reason Spring 2023 can't be a very good one.

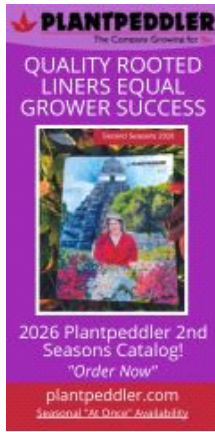
Yes, we're back to talking about weather as the key to our success! Growers tell me that, despite economic, social and political issues, they believe consumer demand will be there. I heard that the mood at MANTS, held the week before in Baltimore, was much the same.



### At the keynote

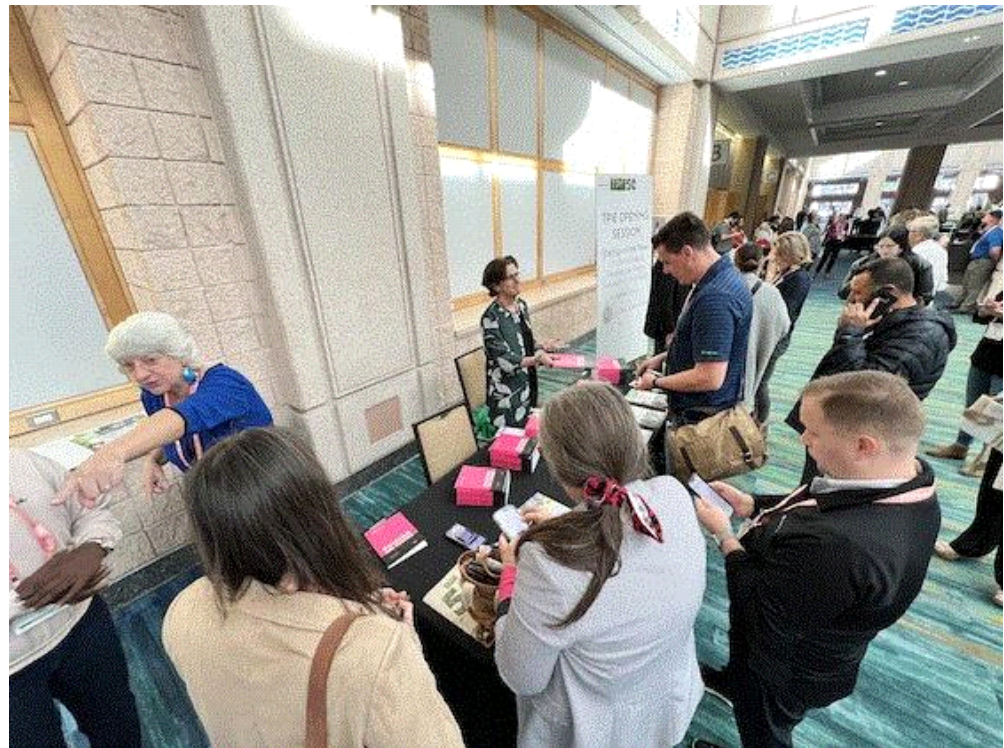
TPIE's opening-day keynote has become a must-attend event because they've found great trend analysts who can connect our product to the high-level trends happening around the world. Returning for her fourth TPIE was trend analyst Christine Boland, who knows our industry well. Her talk covered a vast range of social trends. They include:

- **Disconnectedness**—We're more connected than ever, yet we feel less connected. And we



seem to lack a common narrative.

- **Expanding awareness of our interconnectedness**—Social media and global news sources has made us aware of how interconnected we all are. The pandemic and its supply chain issues certainly put a light on that fact. That has the positive effect of us knowing how we fit within the value chain and producing a sense of urgency to fix the problems.
- **The “phygital” evolution**—The connecting of the physical and digital worlds using AI tools. The metaverse is part of that, but also the many ways the shopping experience is being enhanced with digital tools (personally, I never grocery shop without checking my store app for special coupons).
- **Overdrive + perfectionism**—Christine says in today’s society, the pressure to perform is high; our brains are overstimulated; we’re obsessed with “faster,” “better” and “newer”; and there’s no room for doubt or vulnerability. Said Swiss writer/philosopher Max Picard, “Nothing has changed the nature of man so much as the lack of silence.”



Christine signing her book.

But Christine had much good news for our industry! For instance, a synopsis of 50 studies from around the world reveals that spending just 20 minutes a day around indoor plants can result in more well-being and positive thoughts.

And she offered a sort of “metamorphosis” we can all undergo that can help turn all these societal challenges into positives:

- Cynicism — Positivism, hope, possibilism
- Inward focus, bubbles — Curiosity, kindness, inclusivity
- Monologue — Dialogue
- Individualism — Mutualism
- Marketing to consumers — Mattering to people
- Nature as resource — Nature as partner
- Competition — Cooperation

I especially like the fifth one—mattering to people instead of marketing to consumers. That’s what we all want from the companies we deal with!

Christine offered these nutshell tips for business to navigate this crazy new world we live in:

- **Define your true north.** What does your business stand for, believe in?
- **Add meaningfulness to your business.** “Create value from your values.”
- **Be a “connectionneur.”** Help your customers connect with you, with each other and with the world. Take responsibility, be part of the solution and take care of everyone’s mental well-being.

High-level, heady stuff, and if you're a bit confused, I can understand. But rest assured, our industry is amazingly well positioned to be a positive force in the world. Plants ARE part of the solution and they do so much for humanity’s well-being.



## On the trade show floor

You want plants, I've got them! Starting with a few prize-winners:

The Favorite New Flower Plant AND the Favorite New Foliage Plant Award both went to one nursery, Aroid Greenhouses. I suspect that's happened before, but I'm not sure. I'll have to ask FNGLA COO Linda Adams. (Aroid also got the Best Use of Large Space Award.)

Favorite New Flower Plant is **Anthurium Tricolor**. That amazing foliage needs no explanation! (As for it being a flowering plant, well, it is an anthurium. But I don't think it's grown for its blooms, do you?)



Favorite New Foliage Plant is ***Philodendron billietiae* Variegated**. With long stems and massive, narrow, shield-shaped leaves, it's a foliage collector's dream! That's family patriarch and grower Edgar Amezcuita showing it off.



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## Some cool plants

Danny Summers of the Garden Center Group always sends a group of judges out onto the trade show floor to seek out products they'd like to sell in their garden centers. Most were hardgoods, but some were plants. A few include:

**Vriesea 8322** by Deroose Plants. This is a marbled vriesea that's much more compact than your typical marbled vriesea. And when grown with less fertilizer, it turns more pink. Granted, 8322 is not a sexy name, but owner Paul Deroose is remedying that via social media. Send in your suggestion to [info@derooseplantsusa.com](mailto:info@derooseplantsusa.com) and you might just win your own 8322 ... or whatever your winning name is.



O.F. Nelson & Family is now in the hands of the fourth generation, plus the head grower, who's also one-third owner. Known for roses, they also grow lots of bougainvillea, but to please one particular customer, they dreamed up this multi-variety bougainvillea basket and found it to be popular enough to offer to all. In fact, somebody saw it at the show Wednesday and drove to the nursery Thursday to buy up a bunch of them! These are co-owners Ramon Diaz and Clay Nelson.



Proven Winners did well as a first-time TPIE exhibitor with their leafjoy houseplant line, grown by The Plant Company in Virginia. The Cool Product judges like how easy it was to buy a case of their various offerings, including the H2O Mini (this is a new taller “Fluted Mini”), along with another new H2O design, Elkhorn (the ball shape). Oh, in the background is the booth award they got for “Excellent Brand Promotion—Large Booth.”





## LiveTrends Design

One of the most colorful, exciting and product-packed booths at TPIE for the past several years has been that of LiveTrends Design Group, which offers more cool new stuff each year than some companies create in a lifetime. And it's impeccably displayed (in fact, they won the "Most Inspiring" booth award). Most fascinating is that they discard 80% of the ideas from their team of brilliant designers! It's impossible to cover even a tithe of their stuff, but owner Bisser Georgiev took us through some highlights:

Their "Be You" brand includes any product that immediately makes you smile, like this "Bloom by Bloom" collection featuring "Terrazzo," "Bug Life" and "We the Peeps."



The "Autumn Morning" collection in their original LiveTrends brand features these cute animal and plant figures: "Hedgie the Hog," "Gourd," "Sully Snail" and the little squirrel named "Peanut."



Be You's North Pole winter collection has an array of seasonal figures, including these crazy snowmen (the name of which I didn't jot down) that Bisser is showing off.



Also in LiveTrends news, they're now offering "LiveTrends Creative Services"—complete client design service for everything from trend forecasting, product design and data analysis to sourcing, packaging, store fixturing and in-store merchandising systems ... the complete package. They figured if they can do it for themselves, why not do it for others?



## Costa never disappoints

There were 10 foliage introductions from Costa Farms this year, any of which could be a cool product or favorite plant winner. Here are my personal picks:



Philodendron Golden Crocodile



*Sarcoglottis sceptrodes* (It's a type of orchid with sweet-smelling, but non-showy, flowers.)



Aglaonema Solar Flair



Costa's Justin Hancock with *Schismatoglottis wallichii* Green Shield.



## Inverde by Express Seed

A recent press release read in haste might have led one to think that Express Seed was getting into the foliage business. But that's not the case—Express has been in the foliage business for a long time and in a major way. What they've done to warrant a press release is formalize their foliage business—turning vendor relationships into partnerships and giving the program a name: Inverde.

Explained Scott Rusch, Director of New Product Development, "The category is exploding, but the supply chain is the wild west." Inverde hopes to help tame it.

Those partnerships will produce cooperative marketing efforts, easier ordering of products from multiple sources, and more and better technical support. The partners in Inverde cover all the bases, from breeding to URC producers to liner growers, and includes Danziger, Syngenta Flowers, Green Circle Growers, Knox Horticulture, Moss Hill Foliage, Ornamentex, Plantas Ilimitadas, Succulents Unlimited, Vitro Plus, Evanthia and more.



Left to right: Head technical expert and founder of the Express's foliage program Estuardo Arriaga, supply chain expert Sandy Raupp and Director of New Product Development Scott Rusch.



## Happiness abounds

Maybe it's a reaction to the pandemic, or an antidote to all the gloom and angst, but "happy" seemed to be a bit of a theme at TPIE. I spotted it in several booths:



I love this logo for new TPIE exhibitor Happy Valley Plants.



Sol Soils Premium Potting Soils will help you “Grow Happy Plants.” Featuring larger-than-usual perlite, this “gritty and chunky” mix is said to encourage root growth and help prevent root rot diseases. (It’s also a Cool Product Award winner.)



One of the new packages from finished plant grower Hendrik's Greenhouses of Beamsville, Ontario (AKA "House Plants by Hendrik's) is "Happy Plants." Signage in their booth pointed out that "People are searching for happiness," and cited the fact that at Yale University, the class "The Science of Wellbeing" (AKA "Happiness 101"), which debuted in 2018, has become the most popular course in the school's 317-year history. (You can access the class for free at [coursera.org](https://www.coursera.org).)

### Spotted: Bros with Hoes

I'm a sucker for young people coming into our industry, bringing with them new ideas, new attitudes and new aesthetics. I found all that and maybe more in the t-shirts worn by [Bros with Hoes Plant Co.](#) founders Jason Paluzzi and Kyle Kroepelin, who dropped by the *GrowerTalks* booth.





The Apopka business is just three years old, said Kyle ("Four," corrected Jason) and they have a retail store, an online business and some wholesale sales, too. How'd they get started? Kyle was in the irrigation business, and they started buying and reselling foliage "for beer money," said Jason (who happened to be drinking one at the time).

I never did get to the bottom of the skull logo (more beer?), but I promised to pay the guys a visit on my next trip to Florida to learn more about this interesting new operation.

### **Finally ...**

I'd write reams more, but I've got to get to my next winter trade show, IPM Essen in Essen, Germany. I've gotten hints already that the mood should be good despite ridiculously high

heating fuel prices and inflation and the war and ... but hey, growers everywhere are 1) resilient; and 2) optimistic.

If we could just 3) control the weather, we'd have it made!

Stay tuned for a full report next time. Plus, I'll eventually edit and post the video Ellen, Kim and I shot at TPIE.

Feel free to email me at [beytes@growertalks.com](mailto:beytes@growertalks.com) if you have ideas, comments or questions.

See you next time,



**Chris Beytes**

Editor

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