Reporting on TPIE while at IPM



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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First-time exhibitors
Thank you, Linda!
Lots of new plants
LiveTrends picks
Fake plants do what?
Plant geeks geek out
Finally ...



If it's Tuesday ...

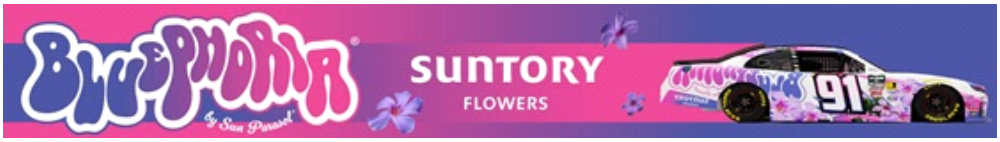




Remember the funny travel movie “If It’s Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium”? Well, welcome to my world, where last Tuesday I was in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, for the Tropical Plant International Exposition (TPIE), and this Tuesday I’m in Essen, Germany, for IPM Essen. And in between there’s the regular industry news crossing my inbox. I’ve got a tablet full of notes and a photos file full of images … what to write about first? I don’t want to confuse you with what I saw where.

Tell you what: Let’s just do a thorough recap of TPIE and some of the new varieties and products at that show, then next time I’ll do the same with IPM. If there’s any breaking industry news that I think you can’t live without, I’ll put it at the bottom. If not, I’ll save it for when I’m back home in Orlando.

Sounds like a plan!



At TPIE: Decent crowds, great sales

That was the message I got from numerous exhibitors who told me they thought the show was busy Wednesday, but slowish on Thursday and Friday, and yet they were booking strong orders, often from new customers. I didn’t meet a single exhibitor who wasn’t happy with the outcome of the show—and that’s what’s important.







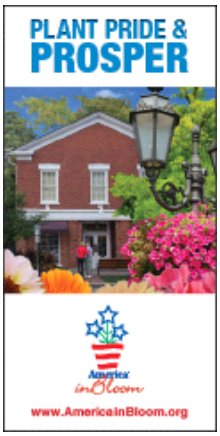

As for the trade show aisles, I saw plenty that were hard to squeeze through, so folks seemed to be moving across the show in waves … I told exhibitors to be patient—the folks are on their way!





An exciting part of the show for many of us was seeing 60-plus new exhibitors on the show floor, some of whom are youngsters with start-up businesses looking to solve problems and meet new needs. It's amazing how many young folks have gotten into houseplants, then found that they want something new or better for growing them.

A few years back, I introduced you to Lila and Kate at Flourish Plant Food, who, as new plant parents some years ago, found that traditional fertilizer stinks … so they added peppermint oil to theirs. And they made the packaging cool, so it "could be disguised on a well-stocked bar cart," as they put it on their website. Now they're TPIE veterans.





First-time exhibitors (continued)

This year, I met Kris Kalkowski and Rickie Ritchie, two Las Vegas residents who had a problem: She'd fill the sink with her plants to water them, meaning he couldn't do dishes or make coffee or whatever. A doodle on a piece of paper came up with a solution: Drain Drawer Pots, a patented pot with a slide-out overflow drawer. Patented because Kris is an attorney.

Available in several sizes and colors, as you can see. Several people (including me) commented that they first thought the drawer was for car keys or something, which led them to say they might have to design a second pot, one with TWO drawers.



I met another first-time exhibitor who was born into the industry, but just launched her own

company. Jaqueline Costa, daughter of Mike Costa and hence a cousin of the Costas who own Costa Farms (where she has, in fact, worked for more than 20 years), launched The Farmer's Daughter, a boutique hardgoods and fashion company capitalizing on the "eco-chic gardening" trend, she said.

Her containers are stylish, the accessories are functional and cool, and the linen jumpsuits and sun hats fit the whole vibe. The display was exciting enough to earn her the Outstanding First-Time Exhibitor Award. Who knows—maybe she's the next Martha Stewart!



It's great to see these young people, whether veterans or newcomers, have potential careers in our green industry.



Thank you, Linda!

Big news at the show was the sad-but-expected retirement of 40-year FNGLA veteran Linda Adams, COO of the organization. She joined the then-FNGA in 1985 (the year I was president of FNGA's Space Coast chapter!) and worked her first TPIE a few years after that, so she knows the show from when it was in its infancy. This was her last "official" show, but I'm sure we won't keep her away.



As for her retirement, she said she'll still be doing some projects for the association, including her Plant People Podcast (my appearance on which I linked to last time). And she'll be traveling, visiting her industry friends across the country.

Filling Linda's size 6 pumps will be Shawn Pattison, a Coast Guard veteran who's got agricultural chops from stints at two tree farms, running his own landscape business and managing an estate vineyard. And he's got a decade of association leadership experience to help out with the politicking required in the job. Congrats, Linda, and welcome, Shawn!



You say you want plants?

The Exhibitor Showcase area on the trade show floor is a convenient one-stop-shop to examine new varieties and hardgoods offered by exhibitors, after which you can go see the products in the various booths.

Mega-grower Costa Farms entered 10 nice new plants (the maximum allowed, otherwise they might have had more!), and plant hunter Mike Rimland was nearby to show me a few of his favorites, none of which I bet you've ever seen:

Monstera pinnapartita



This species is one of those that’s been collector-available (as small plants), but not commercially available. It’s got the deeply split leaves that plant parents seek out and dark green foliage that will hold up well indoors. And they’ve got big plants available—no need to spend $100 for one leaf.

Scindapsus beccarii



Another species that you've probably never seen. This native of Malaysia looks nothing like the silver-spotted, small-leafed *Scindapsus pictus* (improperly called silver pothos) you've known for years. I think clivia or traveller's palm when I see its flat, two-dimensional habit. It's another one Mike said holds up well and easily indoors.

***Epipremnum amplissimum* Variegata**



I like this one because it's like no pothos I've ever imagined with its long strap leaves—I'd have guessed it to be some sort of dracaena. It's another one collectors may find, but it hasn't been available in commercial quantities until now. It has the same climbing/trailing habit and easy-care attributes of a regular pothos, making it good for newbies and collectors alike.



Two award-winners

Plants in the Exhibitor Showcase get voted on by attendees, who pick their favorite foliage and flowering plants. Here are the two that got the most votes:

Favorite New Foliage Plant: Philodendron Red Congo Variegated



From Penang Nursery (which also won the “Excellent Use of Storytelling” booth award for their fictional plant magazine theme), this one is a no-brainer to sell for its amazing green, red and gold color patterns. I showed a picture to Laurie (who didn't attend the show with me) and she let out a loud "Ooooh!" so I know it's a good pick. Now to figure out how to get her one ...

Favorite New Flowering Plant: Medinilla Royal Glow

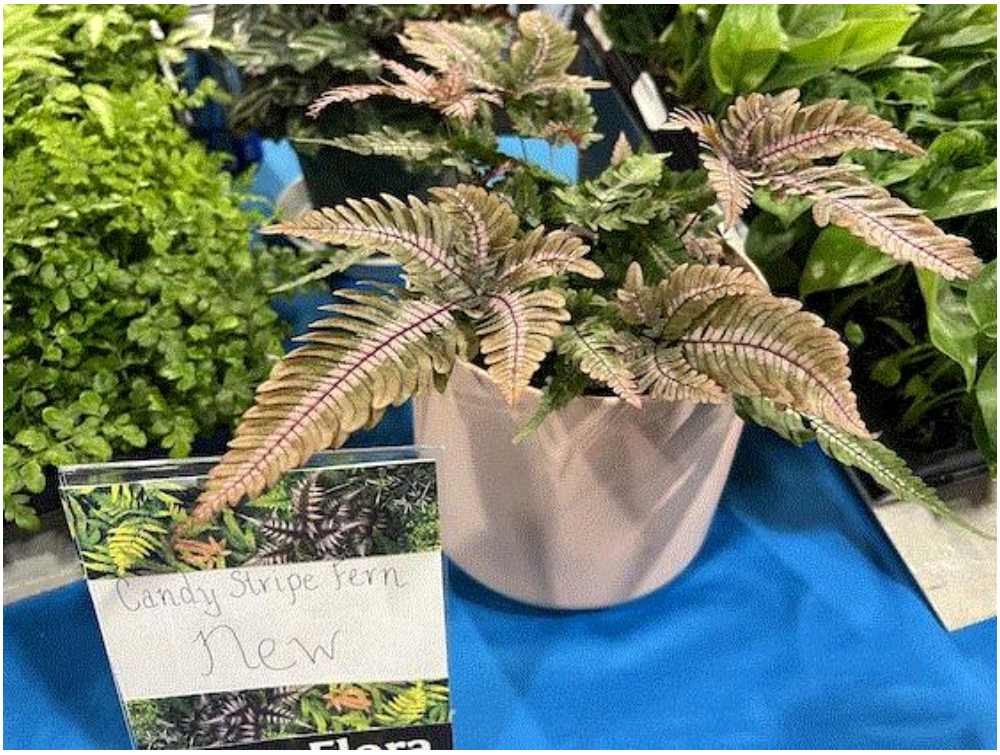


Another "Ooooh" plant, Royal Glow, from Living Colors Nursery, is a lovely selection of this tropical shrub with big pink flowers and boldly ribbed foliage. Medinilla aren't the easiest plants to keep, so it's not for the beginner or faint-of-heart. But as I always like to say, "I never medinilla I didn't like."



With fronds like these, who needs anenomes?

With apologies to the anemone growers out there, this is Candy Stripe, a brake* fern (*Pteris aspericaulis* var. tricolor) that features bright pink new growth that gradually softens to a blend of green, cream and pink. It's good for shade gardens, terrariums or as a houseplant. It's from Casa Flora in Texas.



What's funny is, not being up on my fern cultivars, I might not have spotted this one had not Casa Flora's Michelle Bundy almost attack me with it on the show floor so I wouldn't miss it. I asked, "Is there a new sign in it at your booth?" She sheepishly admitted that she'd forgotten. When I arrived there a bit later, there was indeed a "new" sign—hand-written, but written nonetheless!

Oh, some Casa Flora news straight from the mouth of company president Richard Lim: To make more use of their tissue culture lab experience, they're getting into native plants. Many ferns are natives, so it's a natural extension of what they've been doing well for years.

** From Wikipedia: The term "brake," used for members of this genus, is a Middle English word for "fern" from southern England. Its derivation is unclear and is generally thought to be related to "bracken."*



LiveTrends picks from their newest team member

It's not TPIE coverage without showing you something from LiveTrends Design Group, which won the "Inspiration at its Best" booth award for 2025 because it's impossible to look at their displays and not come away with ideas for your own business. Usually, founder and CEO Bisser Georgiev takes me through. This time, for fun, I allowed one-week veteran Milan Clinkingbeard to show me HER favorites. She's new to LiveTrends, but not to plants—she spent 15 years with Tagawa Greenhouse in Colorado, so she knows her stuff!



One of her favorites is the Enchanted Glade Collection for fall, which features "whimsical wildlife adorned with natural accessories and autumnal hues that evoke warmth, joy and nostalgic memories of the season" (as their signage reads). Milan is holding one called Harvest Mice; below is Sully Snail.



Another favorite is Illuminate, with light-up LED globes that hold water for root plants specially grown in water only (not in soil, then washed off), so the plants perform better for the end consumer. A great dual-use product!



I agree with Milan on both and would add this silly one: Daily Catch from their Coastal Club Collection.





I agree with this, too

I'm one of the TPIE booth judges and one of our unwritten rules is that we don't like to see fake plants in the booths—no silk or plastic or whatever when you're in an industry that celebrates the beauty of real plants. So as I was navigating the show aisles in a golf cart Wednesday morning with my fellow judges before the show opened, we spotted this sentiment on a booth wall: "Keep it real, fake plants suck," I jammed on the brakes.

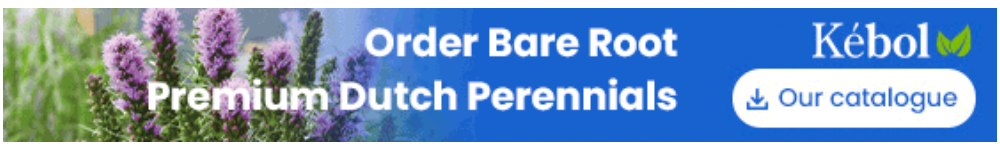


That’s Erika Santa, who came up with the slogan.



"Now that is how to get attention!" we all agreed as we hopped out of the cart for a closer look at the booth—the only time we did that during the judging process.

And that, my friends, is why ForemostCo won the "Stand Out in a Crowd" booth award at TPIE.



Plant geeks geeking out

No other plant show seems to draw more plant geeks than TPIE. All three days of the show, exhibitors and attendees alike are scoping out booths looking for plants to buy or mooch. If you

see a booth with stickers on plants it’s because somebody has already paid for them in advance. Or you can do like Aroid: turn your display into a plant store, complete with traffic control (the line was 20 deep at one point) and Square for taking card payments. Their unique aroids are a hot commodity and it was gratifying to see such strong sales taking place at a wholesale show.





Even Proven Winners' Marshall Dirks couldn't resist taking something back home to Illinois.

As for me, I drove my F150 down from Orlando and returned home with a Chinese fan palm, a white bird of paradise, six assorted guzmanias and an unusual philodendron. Hey, one needs to keep one's tropical garden looking nice—and I've got 2 acres to landscape!



Finally …

I'm reliving TPIE from a Ramada hotel in Essen, Germany, having walked that big show for two solid days. I will relive THAT event next week from my home office in Orlando, where it's bound to be warmer and sunnier. But while cold and gloomy outside, inside the convention center (the messe, as it's called; pronounced "messy"), the mood was fairly positive. Issues facing European growers are labor ($30 an hour in the Netherlands for basic day labor, I'm told) and regulations—especially the taking away of greenhouse chemicals and peat, as well as EU regulations around packaging (is a plant pot a package?). But they seem to accept that reality. In positive news, the energy situation has stabilized, so growers aren't having to choose between growing plants and selling their natural gas contracts.

But nobody seems to expect spring to break records, as retailers are being conservative with orders and nobody wants to grow spec crops anymore—it's too expensive. So like in the U.S.,

growers and retailers are hoping for great weather to maximize sales—the hope every spring since man started growing plants for sale, I think.

Feel free to email me at beytes@growertalks.com if you have ideas, comments or questions.

See you next time!



Chris Beytes
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