

TPIE Roadshow, festive air plants, Boston fern and Costa & consumers

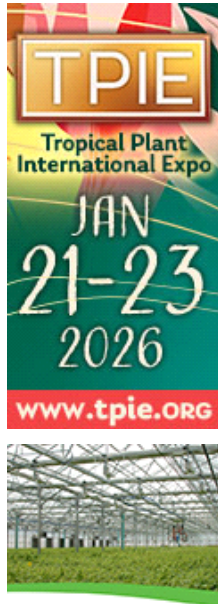
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TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

TPIE Roadshow Stops
Festive Air Plants
Costa's Consumer Push
Cultivation Station: Boston
Fern



Ball Culture Guide

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By JIM NAU

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TPIE Roadshow Stops

I promised to keep you apprised of the events happening at the upcoming **Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE)** happening January 21-23 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Good news—I have some updates about the TPIE Road Show hitting the road the day before the official show opening. It's a full-day tour that'll offer you a unique opportunity to go behind the scenes at four tropical foliage operations in nearby Homestead.



Those stops include:

Bernecker's. Established in 1961, Bernecker's provides lush interior foliage for interiorscapers and independent garden centers. Now part of Costa Farms, the operation is a blend of close-knit family business and the latest in industry innovation.

Butler's Foliage. For more than six decades, Butler's Foliage has been a pioneer in eco-friendly growing. They've been using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for more than 30 years to produce cleaner, healthier plants. Check out how their dedication to IPM and sustainability results in stunning Mandevilla, Cordyline, Ficus and so much more.

Living Colors Nursery. Family-owned since 1993, this South Florida nursery specializes in bromeliads and orchids. Using premium European peat moss and advanced growing techniques they produce plants with unbeatable color, longevity and health. And as I recall, their Medinilla Royal Glow won the Favorite New Flowering Plant at TPIE this past January. Maybe you'll see it in production.

Pine Island Nursery. Founded in 1972, Pine Island Nursery is a destination for plant lovers and fruit tree fanatics alike. Nestled in a natural upland pine habitat southwest of Miami, this 50-acre family-owned farm is packed with tropical fruit, nut and spice trees. They also have rare palms, too.

Lunch will be provided on the tour. You'll need to register for the Roadshow and TPIE, as well. Do both [HERE](#). Seats often sell out, so get yourself registered sooner rather than later. And by the way, this tour qualifies attendees to earn 6.0 FNGLA CEU credits.

By the way, if the tropical fruit, nut and spice trees at Pine Island intrigue you, may I suggest touring the [Preston Bird and Mary Heinlein Fruit & Spice Park](#) in Homestead. Bossman Beytes, his wife and I visited a few years back and we are still talking about it. If you love mangoes (and who doesn't?) it's a must-visit.



Festive Air Plants

Speaking of TPIE, last January I stopped in the [Air Plant Shop](#) booth. Tillandsia galore! I thought the St. Augustine-based operation was a new business but it turns out they've been around for about a dozen years or more. Doing both wholesale and online retail, they are the largest importer of air plants, all or most of which come from Guatemala. I have in my notes that someone in the booth said, "We live and breathe this product." I believe it.

An email popped into my inbox from Air Plant Shop this week announcing some of the fun items they have to offer for the holidays, and I wanted to share them with you.

Pre-orders are closing soon for these adorable 12-in. tall air plant Christmas trees. Did I say they are *adorable*?



If you miss out on those, how about the festive forest terrariums?



And these Peppermint Swirl Tectorum don't need any dressing up to make them holiday-appropriate.



Whether they are wholesale or retail items, I'm not sure—but if you like them and want a wholesale order I bet you could work something out.

Find Air Plant Shop's holiday collection [HERE](#).



Costa's Consumer Push

A few years ago the world's largest foliage producer, industry heavyweight **Costa Farms**, embarked on a consumer-facing marketing strategy. They developed a friendly logo and an amazing social media presence. No longer just faceless farmers behind the plants, Costa Farms is a grower, but also a formidable brand.

Two summer events in New York City provide an example for how Costa is growing its consumer-facing national presence. They attended the NYC version of **PlantCon** and hosted an immersive media event with consumer-popular plant stylist and author Hilton Carter.

"We're meeting consumers where they are, from social to retail to real-life experiences," said Mari Carrasquillo, VP of Marketing at Costa Farms. "Being in New York gives us a platform to inspire, educate and innovate in a way that only Costa Farms can."

For the first event, Costa Farms participated in PlantCon NYC, a two-day event held August 30–31 at Pier 17. Costa had an education-driven booth, hosted Q&As with its in-house experts and engaged thousands of plant lovers with exclusive giveaways and sneak peeks.



For the second, Costa hosted a media event in Manhattan, designed to showcase plant styling inspiration and product innovation. The event brought together editors, influencers and stylists for a meet-and-greet with Hilton and Costa Farms' own horticulturist Justin Hancock. They created a "nature nook" and explained to guests how living with plants has emotional, physical and aesthetic benefits. "We want plants in every corner of every home," Hilton said. "Costa Farms gives people more than just plants; they offer the tools and the vision to create something meaningful in their own homes."



Richard Pham, Brooklyn-based indoor plant expert at Plant Daddy MD, checks out Costa's collection for 2026.

These events are part of Costa Farms' multi-year integrated marketing campaign, which blends live experiences with data-driven outreach, affiliate support, influencer partnerships and digital storytelling.

Sun Parasol
Original XP
Double Pink Blush



Cultivation Station: Boston Fern

I had Andrew Britten, Ball Horticultural's Technical Sales Manager for Tropicals and Foliage, on the phone last week, asking what a good crop might be to feature in a new edition of this occasionally occurring primer on cultivating certain crops. We concluded I should cover Boston Fern. You might recall from the last edition of *Tropical Topics* that Boston Fern is on [Real Simple's recent list of trending houseplants for 2026](#). And you want to be ready for trending houseplants, right?

Andrew mentioned something I had not realized—and maybe you hadn't, either. He said about 90% of what is sold as Boston Fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata* var. *Bostoniensis*) is actually *Nephrolepis exaltata* Nevada, a cultivar of Boston Fern. According to Andrew, "Its performance is much better than the Boston. They obviously can look identical, but Nevada is more durable."



Andrew confirmed that Boston ferns and their lookalikes are being potted up heavily now, so it's an excellent time to feature it here. And I'm going to put another trendy twist on it. You may recall from my [September Tropical Topics](#) that mini versions of things—totes, makeup, drinks and even Cheetos—are increasingly popular. That's why I'm including the cultivation info for mini versions of Boston Fern. And they're so cute!

Total Crop Time from 72 liner to: 4-in.=10-12 weeks with 1 plant per pot; 6-in.=16 weeks with 1 plant per pot.

Soil/Media: A well-drained mix with plenty of air porosity and moisture retention, such as your annual mix

pH: 5.0-5.5

EC: 1.0-1.5

Temperature: 65-70F

Humidity: 60-80%

Light Level: 2,000-3,000 f.c.

Pests and Diseases: Watch for Caterpillar, Fungus Gnat, Mealybug, Thrips, Pythium and Rhizoctonia

One last suggestion from Andrew: "Ferns can be sensitive to salts, especially if left on the leaves," he wrote to me. "If you are using liquid fertilizer overhead, be sure to rinse afterwards. I would feed at a level of 150-200 ppm."

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions for content, email me about them at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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