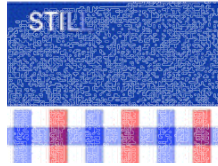
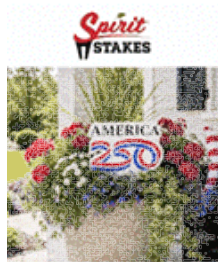


## Finds from TPIE and MANTS



FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2026

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**COMING UP THIS WEEK:**  
Plants—But More  
Booth Inspiration for Your Store  
First Timers  
The Upside Down  
Cool Finds at MANTS  
More MANTS  
GardenComm's New Leader  
Speaking of ...  
Congrats, DeVroomen!



### Plants—But More

I'm here in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, as I write this, attending the Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE)—the prettiest convention center interior you'll ever see. I started the week, though, north of here in Central Florida, touring some tropical foliage operations of different sorts. You'll read more about those in upcoming editions of my *Tropical Topics* newsletter—stay tuned.

On our drive to South Florida, however, we made a quick stop in Winter Garden to check out an operation more akin to what *buZZ!* readers are interested in—the LiveTrends Boutique, a plant shop operated by [LiveTrends Design Group](#). Or is it a plant shop? On the trade show floor a few days later, I saw LiveTrends founder Bisser Georgiev and mentioned we stopped by his plant shop. He replied with something along the lines of "Oh, there's a lot more than plants!"

To me LiveTrends' consumer experience is the perfect blend of plants *and* gifts. There are plants in décor items representing LiveTrends' brands of BeYou, Urban Jungle and Uncommon Roots,

**PLANT PRIDE &  
PROSPER**

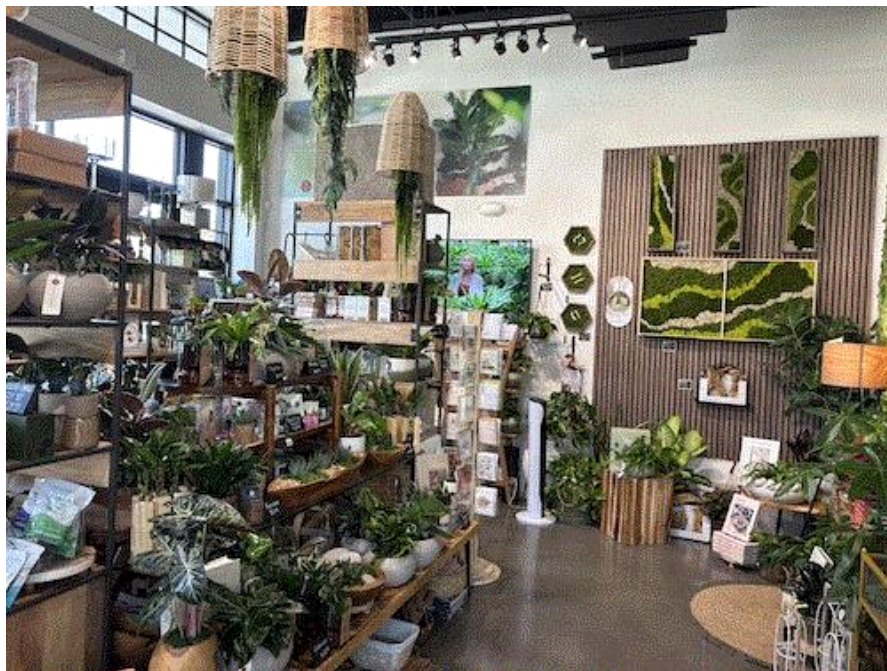


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but also a wonderfully curated collection of gift books and candles and fragrances and bags and hats (one that said "plot parent") and pet-related gifts I just needed to have.



Name Badge Beytes\* poking around the store.





And so many fun stickers and cards—and even the illustrator who created many of them staffing the register!



That's illustrator Megan peeking from behind the counter!

It's a shop with just the right ratio of plants to modern-day curios—and that means plant people and gift seekers are shopping in the same store, expanding the shop's set of potential customers.

Before I move on to covering the show, I want to mention that when Chris and I walked into the shop the first thing I said was "It smells so good in here." Walking through the shop, I discovered the source. Even the store's fragrance is a selling opportunity.



## Booth Inspiration for Your Store

As I am on a time crunch with *buZZ!* this week, I'll present just a few bits—such as the award-winning booths, plants and products—that you can put your own spin on in your store. And since I began with LiveTrends, let's continue with them.

LiveTrends' booth received the Inspiration at Its Best Award. The staff reliably creates a booth space that feels welcoming and inspirational and this year I feel they kicked it up a notch with "Hey, I can do that, too" vignettes. Case in point, their Cabinet of Curiosities display of Halloween/Dia de las Muertos-themed items. Store owners, you can create this on any scale that fits your available space. And for any holiday! I'd go big if I were you.



I'm doing my official tour of the space later this morning so expect more visual inspiration from LiveTrends in future *buZZes*.



## First Timers

It was the first year of exhibiting for the young folks at [BWH Plant Company](#). The self-described plant nerds started their journey in horticulture by selling pots of things from a little trailer they'd park at events, breweries and such. And what do you know, that's what they exhibited from on the show floor.



They went from selling their plants at events to selling nationwide online and then wholesale. Their gardening customers started asking to buy their growing media. “Sure, we can do that!” is a smart way to expand your business. Their line of three media products—Dirt Bag, Coco Bag and Sphag Bag—are edgy in appearance and branding, exactly the vibe they are going for. And it’s a vibe that caught the attention of the folks searching for Cool Product Award nominations, too.



Not only did BWH win one of the 15 Cool Product Awards, but they also received the Outstanding First-Time Exhibitor Award.

Your take-home message from BWH is two-fold: 1) Go to where your plant people are and 2) embrace the edgy.

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## The Upside Down

No, Vecna and the kids of “Stranger Things” did not make an appearance at TPIE this year. I simply noticed a bunch of booths with elements that hung upside down.

We first noticed it at [Silver Vase](#). Name Badge Beytes\* noticed that most of the orchids in their booth were inverted from the crossbars within the booth. Unexpected! Stunning! A lot of work, I am sure, but worth the trade show floor chatter. In fact, they received the Stand Out In a Crowd booth award for their efforts.



I then noticed that [Bayview Flowers](#) inverted some of their amaryllis bulbs from their booth structure, too. I like the staggered presentation.



[Penang Nursery](#), which always does an outstanding job with constructing its booth, kinda/sorta had an upside-down element, too. Or is it just floating? Someone familiar with the Avatar

franchise please inform me if those floating islands are also upside down. The booth judges were impressed with Penang's efforts of weaving the "The World of Plants" into the world of Pandora and presented them with the Excellent Use of Storytelling Award.



*\*Bossman Beytes has temporarily been renamed Name Badge Beytes for his efforts to inform trade show attendees on the proper way to wear one's lanyard.*

## Cool Finds at MANTS

*More TPIE stuff to come next week! Let's see what Jen Polanz spotted at the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show a few weeks ago.*

This was my first time at MANTS in more than 10 years and boy did I forget how big it is. With more than 890 exhibitor companies and more than 10,800 registered attendees, it's enormous and, by most accounts, the kickoff to the horticulture year.

The mood on the floor was cautious but optimistic, with some vendors noting that their customers were a little more conservative in their orders than they have been in the recent past. What did I find that could interest your retail customers and help you sell more this year? Read on!

### **Nostrand Benches**

The Irish company **Nostrand** exhibited for the first time at MANTS, showing their ebb and flow display benches. I spoke to Director Harry Kilbey in the booth, and he said the goal is to provide a solution to a growing problem: labor costs related to watering and plant health. He noted they could reduce retailer watering time by 80% to 85%. The benches come in a couple of different styles, including the Signature Hybrid with an aluminum subframe that can feature a treated wood surround, and the Prestige Aluminum, featuring mill-finished steel or anodized steel. They both have telescoping legs to allow easy adjustment on uneven ground, as well as heavy-duty plastic safety corners and a 10-year warranty. Harry noted the darker-color benches were catching the eye of attendees at the show.



***Bentley Seed Co.***

The seed displays in the [Bentley Seed Co.](#) booth caught our eye immediately and made us stop (when I say us, I mean Ball Publishing Account Manager Kim Brown and I). We stopped and talked to Katie Bentley, who is the sales and marketing officer and co-owner with her husband. They are third-generation owners of the Upstate New York-based business, which specializes in non-GMO fresh crop seeds. They sell to independent retailers only, Katie said, and offer assortments in lines like the Home Gardener Line of assorted flowers, vegetables and herbs; an Heirloom Collection of 48 varieties designed to look “vintage-y;” and the newest collection: seed packets that feature sentiments for special occasions. So they double as greeting cards. There’s an assortment of wildflowers, sunflower and forget-me-not in a variety of sentiments from Oh Baby and Congrats to Thank You, Love, Sympathy and more.



More from MANTS

*Jen Polanz continues with her MANTS tour.*

### **Garden District**

During a new product showcase event, Jack Gearing of Windmill Nursery, talked about new introductions through the **Garden District Collection**, a branded shrub program that he said was “created with a powerful, simple goal—we wanted to bring exceptional breeding, we wanted to bring outstanding garden performance (and) strong visual appeal at an affordable price.” The brand is currently a collaboration of three growers, Windmill Nursery in Raleigh, North Carolina; Tom Dodd Nurseries in Semmes, Alabama and Stokley Nursery, also in Semmes, Alabama. Breeders include Jeff Beasley, Mark Griffith and Dr. Michael Dirr, and just a few plants in the collection include: Cherry Creek abelia, Cascade Dream distylium (pictured), Garnet Flame loropetalum, Sugar Snap blueberry and Rise-N-Shine hydrangea. The growers offer a branded pot and tag. The tag is required, but the pot is optional.



### **Pottery Patch**

I always try to stop at a pottery booth to see what they have that's new and trending. **Pottery Patch** was featuring these cool pot designs in the Rust Cement Collection, a new mix of limestone and cement with a rust color. There are nine shapes in the collection, including the head, and they come in sets of two nested (except for the head planter). They can be used indoors or outdoors.



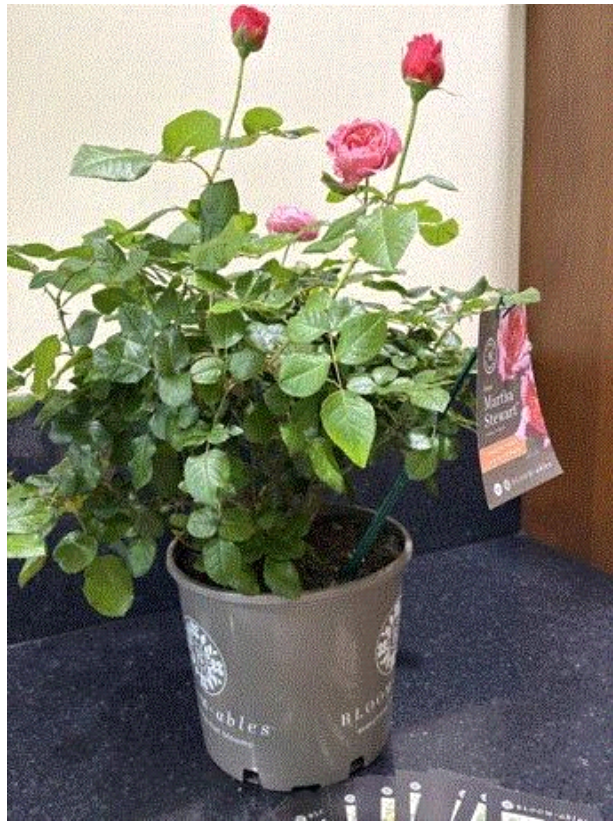
### ***HIP Labels***

The new trademarked BioTAG plant labels from [HIP Labels](#) are an exciting breakthrough in soil biodegradable plant tags. According to President and Owner Bob Lovejoy, the tags hold up through the production cycle and outdoor elements and feel like plastic. But when put in soil alongside the plant, it will spend 10 to 15 months breaking down, and then within another 90 days it will be completely gone, turning into carbon dioxide and water. "This is the product that eliminates plastic," he said during a new product introduction session. "No compost pile is needed. Again, throw it in the hole." The length of time it needs depends on the type of soil. I talked further with Kelvin Okamoto, president of Green Bottom Line, Inc., who consulted on the development of BioTAG. He clarified the tags are made from a mineral-filled bioplastic, which needs microbes and water from soil to break down. The breakdown rate depends on the moisture content, which means sandy soil will take longer, and loamy soil works faster. Clay soil depends on the type, and whether it has microbial activity. The tags can handle any kind of inks, and I saw pictures of the tags after several months of being out in the elements and there was no fading. These tags will be available this year for nursery and greenhouse growers and grower-retailers.



### ***Star Roses & Plants***

We mentioned this in the magazine last year, but I want to put an emphasis on it, because it's a pretty big deal: [Star Roses & Plants](#) is launching the Martha Stewart Rose for 2026. This compact hybrid tea rose offers up tons of apricot-pink blooms and it smells absolutely divine. A blend of lemon verbena, bergamot and honeysuckle notes, it is very fragrant and, according to Jordan Williams, communication manager at Star Roses & Plants, features good disease resistance (including higher black spot performance compared to older varieties). It also produces more than 100 petals on each bloom. Bred by Meilland, Star Roses & Plants will offer free point-of-purchase materials with it, and it will come in the Bloomables branded pot. Star is planning a consumer ad campaign in home and garden magazines to support the introduction, as well.



GardenComm's New Leader

I talked a lot above about storytelling and communicating your brand to customers. Writers do that for you! And this leads me to the announcement that GardenComm: Garden Communicators International has just elected Kathy Jentz as its two-year term president.



I've known Kathy for a while as an author, editor and podcaster. You may even sell her books (co-author of "The Urban Garden: 101 Ways to Grow Food and Beauty in the City" and author of "Groundcover Revolution") in your store! She also publishes *Washington Gardener Magazine*, edits a bunch of journals and hosts the GardenDC Podcast. Kathy also has founded Seed Swap Day (annually the last Saturday of January) as well as Reduce Your Lawn Day (May 20).

Kathy, you sure you have time for this GardenComm presidency? Just joshing. She's been involved in GardenComm for a long time, serving in a number of leadership roles within the organization, including on the Marketing and Education Committees as a Regional Director.

Kathy's philosophy—as many gardeners also believe—is inspiration over perspiration. Get your store involved in GardenComm to better communicate with your customers. Or, hire a garden writer! Either way, you'll surely benefit. Find out more about that [HERE](#).

## Speaking of ...

Speaking of podcasts, my I Dig Your Story podcast dropped a new episode this week and this one features one of you! Katie Jensen owns Katie Casey Designs—a plant shop/garden center/landscape design studio in Clear Lake, Iowa. Oh, and speaking of garden writers, she was one of those, too. What doesn't Katie do?



We had a terrific conversation about how her multitude of work and life experiences combined to give her the knowledge and confidence to begin something of her own. Dig into it over on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), [iHeart](#) and [Amazon Music](#). Thanks for listening!

## Congrats, DeVroomen!

The folks at DeVroomen Garden Products wrote in to inform me that they were given the 2026 Supplier of the Year Award by Landscape Illinois (formerly ILCA). It's an award they are quite proud to receive, and kudos to them for the good work and great service it takes to be honored thusly.

DeVroomen has been at this business for just over 100 years now. That's also something to celebrate! Read more about the company's history, what they do and how they've impacted the industry in [THIS ARTICLE](#) in *Landscape Illinois The Magazine*, the association's official magazine. Congratulations!

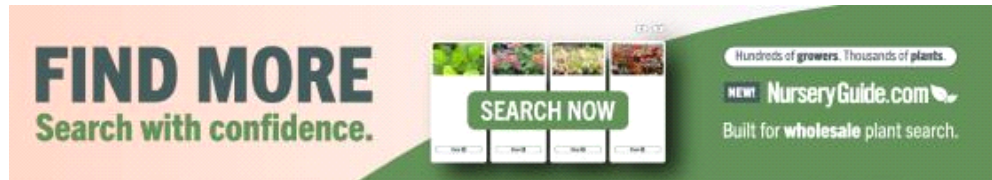
If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, etc., drop me a line if you'd like at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

Ellen

Ellen Wells  
Senior Editor-at-Large  
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