

What Dutch Growers are Growing; Plus Chow Mein Cookies and a Frozen Queen



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Last week in the Netherlands



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PLANIPEDDLER

Last week, I took three days (plus two days of travel time) to visit two shows I haven't been to in at least a decade: **Trade Fair Aalsmeer** and **IFTF** (the International Floriculture Trade Fair). The former is held in the bowels of the insanely ginormous FloraHolland Auction in Aalsmeer and is the home of Dutch auction members exhibiting finished crops to wholesalers and retailers. IFTF, located 20 minutes away at Expo Haarlemmermeer, is home to cut flower growers, breeders and allied suppliers like sleeves, floral foam and a bit of machinery. While it's always spectacular to see tens of thousands of roses in full glory, I don't know much about the global cut flower business, so this newsletter will focus on what I spotted at Trade Fair Aalsmeer.

It's gotten big!

For years when I'd cover the old Hortifair in Amsterdam, I'd slip away to the auction to see the Trade Fair. It was primarily a show for the locals, but it was quickly discovered by international visitors to be THE place for getting ideas for how to grow and dress up potted plants and tropicals. I was looking forward to visiting once again.



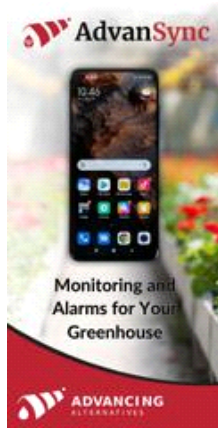
Imagine my surprise when, upon my arrival Wednesday morning, I found it had grown from one hall to three. In the decade I'd been absent, they'd opened up an entire hall of breeding companies and other suppliers, and a third hall dedicated to cut flowers. What used to take a half day to cover now takes a full day ... two, even, if you really dig into it. I managed to see it all in one day only by skipping lunch. Next time, I'm planning more time!

I've got enough highlights for a book (or a magazine). Here are some of my favorites:

Sun Parasol
FiredUp Coral



Eco-friendly



Eco is big in Europe. At three out of the first four stands on the first aisle I noted eco-friendly packaging and messaging of one form or another. Growers are experimenting with paper and other environmentally friendly pots, tags and packaging as an option. Pollinator attractors is another selling point.





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Dutch grower Colour Your Garden combined both (above). They offer a “Bee friendly” line of perennials chosen by noting which ones are most popular to bees at their nursery. You can get them in a standard plastic pot, but they’re also hand-transplanting finished plants into three-count biodegradable fiber trays. Tim Dessing told me they cut out 18 kilos (40 pounds) of plastic per shipping trolley ... however, the price goes up from 3.60 euros to 4.60 per three-pack (they make a 25-cent donation to a charity for each pack sold). Are folks buying? “Very minimal” is how he put demand. Scandinavia is big on eco-friendly products, but his home country of Holland is “definitely not ready yet.”



Above, hellebores and “Garden to Go” herbs and veggies in biodegradable pots. Yet another case of having to transplant from plastic to paper before shipping. You can’t grow in this stuff because it will get mushy and slimy. And nobody is yet automating that transplant process—at least not that I know of.



"Feel Green" is the new eco-friendly line offered by the 55-member grower group Decorum. That's account manager Gert van der Schee showing it off.

BTW, I'm pretty sure these and many of the other I pictured are Modiform's Eco Expert line, made from recycled paper and cardboard.



Pot manufacturer Desch Plantpak offers an impressive array of eco-friendly pots, from recycled plastic and infrared-detectable (that's how recycling systems ID types of plastic types) to various soil-compostable pots.

Crazy colors

I love that Europeans are not afraid of color. I publish pictures like these every chance I get just to aggravate my plant-purist friends. Would I buy one? No. But I love that they may attract new consumers to our products. And if nothing else, they inspire conversation about the moral right or wrong of messing with God's (or Mother Nature's, if you prefer) handiwork.

Some "Royal Art" orchids by Logico:



Confetti



Rainbow



Ficus with "Make-Upz" brand color from GreenCre8.



Eco-friendly crazy colors

Lest you think eco and color clash, think again, as the color people are working on eco versions of dyes and glitters. Amigo Plant and EuroCactus both showed eco-friendly lines that incorporate metal-free colors, plastic-free pigments and starch-based polymers. Granted, they don't have nearly the color and glitter of their garishly unnatural counterparts.



Amigo Plant. At the far right of the display is their eco line.



EuroCactus. The natural color products are in the foreground.

Terrariums are still in vogue

They were everywhere. I spotted them in every size and configuration imaginable, including kit form. Why so hot? It's a combination of young people discovering houseplants, their affinity for the natural goodness of glass, and the promise of low maintenance.





Toss in a light bulb and you've got a terrarium that serves more purpose than just looking stylish.



Three unique products

The Ojo planter. This cute self-watering planter from Lechuza features a clever way to indicate the level of water in the reservoir: the eyes. When open (blue), it's full. When closed (brown), it's empty.





Frozen Queen calla. From Dutch grower BB Plant, Frozen Queen calla emerged as a sport at their nursery 10 years ago. It's got an odd look ... note how the foliage is transparent! It appears delicate and easily burned, but I was told it's actually pretty tough. They are exporting them to Japan, but not to North America ... yet.





Liv In Wax. I've written about amaryllis bulbs dipped in wax, which makes them into a self-contained growing and blooming device. No pot or water needed. Now the company Liv in Wax has taken the same concept to the roots of hyacinth, narcissus, aloe, ponytail palm, pachira and zz plant. Like dyed and painted plants, they'll inspire conversation.





If you ask me about them, the first thing I'll say is how the roots remind me of those haystack cookies you make with chow mein noodles.



Finally I ...



Seen in the Ubink Cactus & Succulent stand. I don't think they were for sale—these were just for fun.

Finally II ...

I never got around to telling you about the two nursery visits I did. One had a cool new machine, the other a cool new greenhouse. Guess they'll just have to wait until next time, because ...



Finally III ...

... because I am on the road once again, this time to Waco, Texas, where I'll be speaking at the Texas Nursery & Landscape Association Grower Summit on the 13th. I'll squeeze in some grower visits both before and after. Plus, I've been promised some good Texas barbecue. Expect a report and photos on both.

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