

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Live and In-Person at Cultivate'21

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Attendees explore the trade show at Cultivate'21 in Columbus, Ohio, for the first time since the 2019 event. If the aisle traffic looks a bit light, don't be fooled: This photo was taken Monday afternoon when the crowd had thinned a bit. And while attendance might have been lower than "normal," it was still excellent by everyone's assessment.

Officially, show hosts AmericanHort don't release attendance numbers, but during a meeting with the press on Sunday, CEO Ken Fisher told Managing Editor Jen Zurko that they had good pre-registration numbers (about 7,400) and expected quite a few walk-ins every day of the show. They were down only about 100 booths, with most of those being Canadian or European exhibitors.

Most importantly to the exhibitors, the right people were in attendance: customers! Throughout the three days of the trade show, we asked various exhibitors about how their show was going, and 100% of them were content with the quality of the audience and the business that was taking place.

What was our takeaway from the show? First, everyone was happy to once again be attending a live event. It was gratifying to be out in public, networking with colleagues.

Second, attendees seemed to have money to spend and goals for what to spend it on. Sourcing plants (before they were sold out), finding labor- and energy-saving devices, and seeking more environmentally friendly products were three popular targets.

If there was a pall over the event, it was the still-broken supply chain, which has usurped labor as the frustration of the day. Bottlenecks in the supply chain are impacting everyone, from manufacturers (who can't get raw materials) to retailers (who hope their Christmas gift items arrive in time for Christmas). The problem is complex, and every industry is facing it, not just horticulture.

One well-connected consultant told me that his logistics expert doesn't expect things to truly get better until Q2 of 2022. If that's the case, we've got another spring before the supply chain is back to normal.

In the meantime, smart buyers were on the trade show floor, speaking face-to-face with suppliers, and that strategy seems to be the best way to get orders fulfilled in the quantity and timeliness they expect. **GT**