

# GROWERTALKS

## Features

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## A Journey to Find What's New

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### Ellen Wells' January Journeys

I had the opportunity to travel to two shows this January, the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE) in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. They provided attendees with two very different venues (and weather patterns), but similar levels of enthusiasm for 2024. In short, people were pumped and ready to plan and purchase.



#### Mid-Atlantic is Top Notch

Many might think of the MANTS show floor to be aisle after aisle of trees and shrubs. Not so! I found quite a few retail-relevant offerings. Here are the ones that caught my eye.

*Pictured: An Oasis Forage Products display offers customers what they need to create a DIY foraged floral arrangement. • Colmet's new line of steel-constructed containers can be assembled by the consumer. • Drip pans under hanging plants is a genius idea.*

#### Oasis Forage Products:

These are snips, pots, degradable foam, collecting bags, wire and more for people who want to go out to their gardens or into nature to harvest flowers, foliage and branches to create their own floral arrangements. Not only is Oasis Forage Products answering the "What do I use to be successful?" question, but they're also offering instructions and encouragement to solve the "How do I put this together?" question. Plus, they're backed by Oasis and have access to the staff and resources that can help garden centers run with

workshop and marketing ideas.

#### Colmet:

The company's new, large steel-constructed containers are assembled with rivets. The industrial design is on trend.

And the container's easy assembly means you can build one for display and have several stacked in flat boxes and out of the way.

### **Hanging Basket Drip Pan:**

These pans from Curtis Wagner Plastics attach to the plastic or coir hanging basket and catch dirty drips before they fall onto furniture, people or whatever's below.

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### **Products Solving Problems in Florida**

Who doesn't love South Florida in January? Mostly cloudy skies were overlooked by TPIE's attendees. They were too busy inside the newly renovated Broward County Convention Center searching for new plants and products to care about what the weather brought their way. Many of them solved age-old consumer problems such as watering, lighting, support and pests. Here are a few of those problem-solving products:

*Pictured: Mossify's new Bendable Moss Pole THIN and Adjustable LED Plant Light. • Plants are grown hydroponically before being placed in their final ornamental container. • Illumination is a big trend in LiveTrends latest offerings.*

#### **Two from Mossify:**

Those Mossify folks are so darn clever with their houseplant accessories. Their latest offerings include the Adjustable LED Plant Light—winner of a Cool New Product Award—and the Bendable Moss Pole THIN—a winner of TPIE's Favorite New Product Award and a Cool New Product Award.

The adjustable and energy-efficient LED lamp puts light where you want it. Anchored by a clip to the pot, the light's initial 8-in. height can extend up to 28 in. The full-spectrum lamp has a 50,000 hour lifespan and five levels of dimmable lighting. A programmable timer offers three different settings.

The Bendable Moss Pole THIN is slimmer than the Original Bendable Moss Pole and its three-pronged staking system allows users to insert it into an already-planted pot. It's available in three sizes—16-in., 30-in. and 42-in.—and is also available in a three pack (all the same size).

#### **Two from LiveTrends:**

Bisser Georgiev's team always seems to have a 1,001 new items in their different collections. More and more of them will be in self-watering pots and soilless vessels—up to 25% of the upcoming items, according to Bisser. About 30 SKUs are in this "water root" category, with all of those plants being grown hydroponically, keeping their roots clean prior to placement in their final ornamental containers.

They're also introducing several products that light up in some way, thanks to LEDs. Several are in seasonal categories—fall and holiday, for example. One new line combines the water root design with an interior illumination. How lovely when used for a dinner party!





*Pictured: Longite's self-watering containers won a Cool New Product Award, so you know this product is retailer-approved. • We the Wild's sticky pest strips are compostable.*

### **Self-Watering Glass Containers:**

Longite/D'Vine Development created this ceramic/terra cotta pot that sits within a glass container. It's a simple solution to watering plants while also having a visually stunning item in your home. These are available in terra cotta and glazed white and black, and in several sizes. The larger unit has a notch through which you can add water to the glass container without having to remove the heavy plant.



### **Compostable Flying Pest Traps from We the Wild:**

These sticky traps are small enough to stick inside the rim of a pot and out of sight. Made from compostable corn, you can toss spent traps into the compost. Each pack comes with 20 strips, a decorative metal storage tin and a wooden stake, providing a

second option for deployment.

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## **Jen Zurko's Adventure at Gulf States**

It was a quick trip of many firsts—my first time in the state of Alabama and my first time at the Gulf States Expo. It's a nice regional show that saw some good attendance. I was told they had more than 2,800 attendees and 300 exhibitors, which means I was dodging around people in every aisle.



The first day (Wednesday) is just for educational sessions, with Thursday and Friday for the expo part. If I had to describe this show using a recipe as an analogy, I would say that it's got a decent helping of MANTS, a pinch of the old IGC Show with some Cultivate sprinkled in, all with a southern vibe.

The theme this year was Mardi Gras and, boy, did people get into it. I was surprised and impressed with how some of the exhibitors decorated their booths.

I didn't see a whole lot "new" that I haven't seen before or that Ellen and Chris hadn't already seen at MANTS and TPIE, but there were a few trends I noticed that illustrate that they make their way into every corner of the country.



The last year or so, I've seen whole shelving units of black, gray and white containers at garden centers and I'm still seeing them.

Another thing I'm noticing are some pastel colors like yellow and, yes, Peach Fuzz-like colors (this year's Pantone Color of the Year).

You know what else I noticed? Faces. Almost all the booths that had statuary and/or containers featured products with heads and faces. Not sure how I feel about them, and I don't see them making their way into my neighbors' and friends' yards yet, but they certainly grab your attention.



Pope's Plant Farm based in Knoxville, Tennessee, produced succulents in finished containers that come in plastic trays. You can even order them on wooden racks that come with free signage. There's a \$1,000 minimum on orders. They also offer succulents in a variety of deco pots, from animals (hedgehogs!) to hanging containers, pumpkins and more.

One last thing that's a feel-good story: I walked by a small, rather twinkly, booth that had lots of people walking up to check it out. Fairhope Pretties is a small start-up business created by Susan Dunahoo (*pictured bottom left*) that sells decorative plant stakes for the garden. Each one is handmade by Susan and no two are alike. Susan is a retired flight attendant who started making the stakes to get her mind off the loss of her mother and sister within the same year. "I just started making them to cheer myself up," she said.



Each one is made up of a long metal screw and nut that holds Italian handblown glass beads, Swarovski crystals and Tibetan silver. Each retails for between \$17.99 to \$21.99. Susan was selling the stakes for \$10 a piece at the show, and by the time it ended on the first

day, she'd already sold out her whole booth and was writing orders like crazy. **GP**