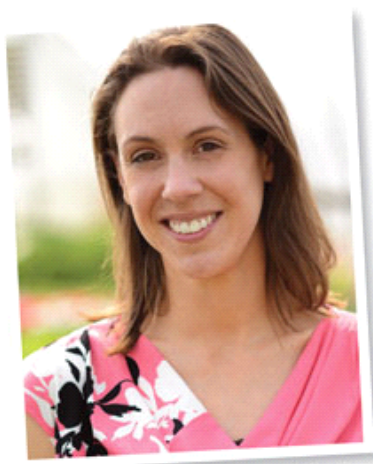


Columns

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Gambling on a Trend

Jennifer Polanz



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Taking a chance on a trend is a little bit (okay, a lot) like playing the stock market. There are long-term trends that pay off slowly over time and others that look more like fads that are quick hits. You have to know when to invest, how long to stay in and when to cut it loose.

It's all a very tricky game involving your money. Trends are mostly regional, which is why it can be rather difficult to distill it down into a magazine like this one. But there are certain hot concepts and products that seem to resonate across the country. After walking (and walking and walking) the halls of AmericasMart in Atlanta, I feel I got a decent look at what could resonate this year.

One trend I hope continues long term, and all indications are it will continue at least this year, is America's love for all things pollinators. Bees were very hip at the market in Atlanta and *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) is the Perennial Plant Association's Plant of the Year for 2017. It would be great if garden centers and mass merchants continued to push native pollinators and educate consumers (many of whom are educating themselves) to plant pollinator gardens. If your customers do jump on board, make sure they register their garden for the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge (www.millionpollinatorgardens.org).

On the home front, the farmhouse chic look is still taking over a significant chunk of the home décor market. Lots of galvanized steel, rusted metal, chalkboard paints and wood accents ruled the day in Atlanta, all accented with flowers and greenery. Ellen Wells saw it, too, as it relates to the dining table in Ft. Lauderdale at TPIE, and gave us some examples.

Oh, and mermaids, y'all. Mermaids everywhere. Now that I know mermaids are a trend, I'm seeing them everywhere (including at Justice, my daughter's favorite store). In an interview with Midwest-CBK President Keith Schneider, he said they've been into mermaids for two years now and it's permeating every aspect of décor, from outdoor garden art to indoor home accents, apparel, coffee mugs and Christmas. This is one of those moments where you wonder just how long this trend will last nationwide. As in, if you think it'll work for you, jump on it soon and then watch carefully for your exit strategy.

You can see the rest of what's trending in the gifting category in the products I highlighted. I wasn't the only one who hit the road this winter. Ellen, Chris Beytes and Jen Zurko set off for multiple locations in January including TPIE, IPM in Germany and the ever-growing MANTS in Baltimore.

Some things aren't trends; they're just a necessity based on a known fact. Here's the known fact: There are more than 75 million Baby Boomers in this country, the oldest around 71 years old. The necessity is tools that help them continue their passion for gardening without the pain that comes with the work. John Johnston gives us the rundown on ergonomic tools.

It's March, and for some, the spring rush has begun, while others are getting ready. May the trends treat you well this year and may you have the wisdom to know when to cut 'em loose. **GP**