

Features

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Product-a-palooza

Jennifer Polanz

What do retailers need most in the fall (besides a steaming hot cup of apple cider)? New products for the next spring. What do we have? It ain't apple cider. Read on for some of the coolest new items we spied at this year's IGC Show in Chicago at Navy Pier, which brought back the New Vendor Zone and featured a new products and new plants section.



The Way of the Worm

One of the bigger trends we saw at IGC Show this year were the natural amendments and soil additives being offered. These worm castings from Sprout Faster are included in those new introductions. The company started two years ago in Joplin, Missouri, and President and COO Aaron Smith said at the show he's seeing an increase in demand for soil supplements thanks to trends like raised bed gardens and container gardening. "We're seeing an uptick in Joplin, which tells me nationally it's huge," he notes, adding they tried to make their 5-lb. worm castings easy to use for customers by putting it in a plastic container. "It's not in a bag, so you can hold the product with one hand and shake it out. It's easy to merchandise, too."

SproutFaster.com

Mr. Roboto

Okay, so none of these super cute clay-based robot planters from The Pottery Patch are named Mr. Roboto, but they are named Gaby, Lucy, Billie and Nellie. That's right, these robots all have names. They're sold individually except for Lucy, the smallest, who comes in a case of two. They range in wholesale price from \$27 to \$61. ThePotteryPatch.com

Getting Kreative

Renee Molina's creations featuring a "root orb" system make a unique presentation for ferns, houseplants and tropical plants. She patented her eco-friendly root orb system five years ago and creates them based on what the plants need nutritionally. The orbs don't just look pretty; they also tell you when they're dry by changing color. "I have an indoor shop and I needed something where I could tell when it needed water," Renee says of her Miami store. "These smart planters will tell you when to water them." She offers them for a wide variety of plants, like sansevieria, ferns, money trees, bromeliads and more. KreativeGardens.com



Décor with Elegance

The display at Art Floral Trading LLC caught the eye of every editor on our team who walked by it. The collections of white porcelain ceramic pieces with textural matte finishes had a sophisticated elegance to them. There are multiple collections, many with unique shapes and designs to set apart any retailer who carries them. These would especially play well in coastal areas. FlorallImport.com

Novelty Flips

They may not be for everybody, but if you're looking for a unique gift item and a talking (and walking) point, may we introduce Grass Flip Flops? These are made with life-like, high-quality synthetic grass, which conforms to the feet of the wearer. I tried them on (the things I do for you, dear reader) and they're surprisingly soft on the feet. Creator Vickie Canepa swears by them: "I wear them every day, they were so super comfortable!" She has a Rack Program where you can buy 90 pairs of Grass Flip Flops, one display rack, custom hang tags and a header card for the rack for one price. The flip flops come in XS, S, M and L. GrassFlipFlops.com

Rabbits in the Garden

This time it's okay—they won't eat anything. CreateaDream by Ultimate Source is releasing the Beatrix Potter Peter Rabbit Secret Garden miniature gardening collection featuring 10 different characters (including some other Beatrix Potter favorites like Jemima Puddle-Duck and Mrs. Tiggy Winkle) along with seven accessories. The line, which is made from durable plastic so it's perfect for young kiddos, will be released to coincide with the February 2018 release of a big-budget Peter Rabbit movie starring the voices of James Cordon, Daisy Ridley and Margot Robbie, among other famous actors. CreateaDream by Ultimate Source also added five new fairies to its Cicely Mary Barker's Flower Fairies line for Spring 2018. FlowerFairiesGarden.com



The Gateway Terrarium

How do we get Millennials hooked on gardening? Starting small might help and Syndicate Home & Garden has a great terrarium starter kit that includes everything one might need (glass jar, soil, moss and stones) except for the plant, all in a well-thought-out package. The best part is it has all the right amounts for the jar, so there's no mess and no leftover supplies. Syndicate also has terrarium tools as an add-on accessory. Position this with the terrarium plants and you've got a ready-made gardening start up.

SyndicateHomeandGarden.com

Connect the Dots

Nature Products USA made us stop in our tracks with wonder at these brightly colored hand-held hummingbird feeders (who doesn't want to feed a hummingbird out of their palm?). Called Nectar Dots, they could be an impulse item at the registers or a display in the birding section. The countertop holder includes the video player that shows how they work. An order gets you 144 Nectar Dots plus the holder and the suggested retail price is \$4.99 for one or 3 for \$12. NatureProductsUSA.com

A Unique Edible Offering

Foodies rule the day and High Mowing Organic Seeds jumped on this love of all things green with a range of microgreen seeds, either for a standup display or for a countertop collection. The rack version comes with 20 packets each of the six best-selling flavors: Arugula, Broccoli, Green Chard, Purple Sango Radish, Red Beet and Red Russian Kale. The countertop collection includes 10 packets of each of the above varieties. According to Emily Dolly, wholesale sales associate at High Mowing, the microgreens take 10 to 14 days to grow in a tray with soil. The company also displayed Sprouting Seeds with a rack that comes with 20 packets of five varieties, plus 30 sprouting jar lids: Alfalfa, Ancient Eastern Blend, Broccoli Blend, Spicy Salad Mix and Sandwich Booster Mix. The Countertop Collection has 10 packets of the same varieties, plus 12 sprouting jar lids. The sprouts take about five days to grow. HighMowingSeeds.com/Wholesale



Bubbles!

Another trend the show highlighted was the continued return to earthy colors and textures. Lotus International featured this look with its bubble glaze Vietnamese clay pottery. “It’s rich, but down to earth,” says Chen Shue of Lotus International. “There has been huge interest in this section.” The collection is called Atlantis Garden and it features a wide selection of sizes, shapes and colors. Lotus-Intl.com

Survival of the Fittest

A variety of identification charts from Darwin’s Garden are designed to allow gardeners to thrive by letting them solve pest, disease and nutrient issues on their own. Ignacio Acuña, who is a graphic designer by trade and a long-time gardener by hobby, created three laminated charts: a pest identification chart (with 22 of the most common bugs in the U.S.), a disease ID chart (with 20 of the most common diseases) and a nutrient deficiencies chart that shows macro, micro and environmental causes. They can be used in the garden center, as well as sold to customers to use in their own gardens. Facebook.com/DarwinGardening

The Business End of an Alpaca

That’s where Alpaca Grow comes from (aka alpaca poo). The makers, Brian and Lisa Mattei, call it the world’s most natural plant food with no added manufactured chemicals. Brian discovered the benefits of alpaca pellets by putting it on his garden and seeing the difference. The product is freeze dried and has no odor in the bag (although it does repel deer, which is an added benefit). You scoop a teaspoon out and mix it with water through a hose-end sprayer to use on plants. Because it comes from alpacas, it’s lower in nitrogen and phosphorus than most livestock manure. Brian and Lisa currently have 47 alpacas on their farm in Vermont (including ones named Daisy, Brienne and Carrington, among others), but they’re expanding to more than 400. AlpacaGrow.com



The Making of a Diva

In the New Vendor Zone, we saw several all-natural products, and Soil Diva, with its fun, fresh packaging, was one of them. It’s a product that Julie Grebe has been marketing to commercial farms across the Western U.S. for about 24 years and now it’s coming to the garden center. It’s a biostimulant, so not a fertilizer, but “beyond fertilizer ... the next step,” as the marketing says. Soil Diva is a liquid microbial-stimulant spray that targets and increases beneficial soil bacteria and fungi. GrowerTalks/Green Profit Editor Chris Beytes asked Julie’s husband, Todd, who’s the president and CEO of Soil Diva, how hard it is to sell a biostimulant. “It’s been a hard sale for 24 years,” he admits, but adds the farmers who’ve used it on crops like lettuce, cherries, corn, beans and more, all have seen the benefits and continue to order it. It’s available to retailers in a 1-oz. concentrate, a ready-to-spray, and in pint and quart concentrates. SoilDiva.net

Mrs. Almi (Oh My)

In what was the most, uh, ah ... well, interesting, stop of the show, we visited the ALMI Plastic Industries booth, which featured the most plastic Mrs. Almi. She was a piece of art purchased by CEO Abraham Lalo and is used as a talking piece (she worked!). While there, we also took in the Israeli company's new line of hanging baskets, called Hanna, as well as the wide variety of other plastic containers in a rainbow of bright colors. It was Abraham's first time exhibiting at IGC Show and he was willing to work with American companies looking to buy from him with regards to freight from Israel. Almi.co.il **GP**