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What's New?

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The word “new” always attracts attention. As a society, we’re always looking for what’s new. That new paint color that’s going to transform a room. That new cooking gadget that will help you reach Master Chef status. Or that new hairdo that completely changes your outlook on life. In our industry, products that are new to the customer’s eyes are what draws them through the store. They may come for the potting soil and 4-Step program they need, but “new” adds more to their shopping cart.

Sometimes I wonder if we play up “new” enough. In apparel, you can often tell what’s new because of seasonal changeovers. But when it comes to plants, it’s hard for customers to know what’s new.

Is it important? I think it is, particularly in certain areas, like the houseplants department. New and trendy containers, new plant arrivals and new accessories can all be played up, giving customers a talking point in their house. For example, a hip new container could definitely elicit an “ooh, where’d you get that?” from a customer’s visiting friend, creating a word-of-mouth opportunity. Or it could just put a smile on your customers’ face.

It’s also important from a logistical point-of-view. New varieties can often be more compact, allowing more to be displayed on the bench. They can have better disease resistance and longer blooming times than similar, older varieties. These improvements can give customers the chance at better gardening seasons.

Fortunately in this issue we have a little bit of all of this. For example, every year we train our sights on the newest products displayed at IGC Show in Chicago at Navy Pier. This year was no different, as Chris Beytes, Ellen Wells and Jen Zurko roamed the floor at IGC to see what’s new. You can read all about it and see the video they shot at www.greenprofit.com (did you forget we had a new website?). Ellen also received The Garden Center Group’s picks for best new products at the Farwest Show in Portland, Oregon. From those, you can decide if any of them are right for your mix.

When it comes to new varieties, we featured them in our Spring Trials coverage in July and August. However, now we’ve gone more in-depth with some of the new introductions because the best way to sell them is to craft a story around them. To that end, we asked the breeders to tell us more about how these varieties came about—their origin stories, if you will—and to highlight their best features. Don’t forget to turn to the *GrowerTalks* side if you need to know how to grow these varieties, too.

And when it comes to new, sometimes it's a new look to give customers a different viewpoint. That's what Hicks Nurseries on Long Island is doing. At 165 years old (that's right, 165), this business is still going strong, and we asked freelancer and garden retail veteran Diana Stoll to find out what (and who) is new there.

The whole store can't be full of new products, but you can infuse a shot of "new" into each department, giving customers a reason to wander the store and load up their carts. **GP**