

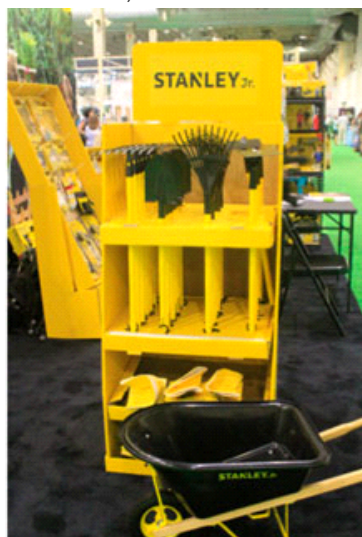
Features

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Product Patrol

Ellen C. Wells & Chris Beytes

There's no better time to think about and prepare for next spring than in the previous summer. August's IGC Show has your back when it comes to product picking for the next big sales season. With hundreds of vendors and lots of new products, the 12th annual show on Chicago's Navy Pier had IGC buyers walking, talking and writing orders. What follows are some of the coolest products we saw, plus four that you, the retail attendees, chose as best of the bunch.



Get 'Em Started Early

Kickstart a child's activity and interest in the yard and garden with her very own tools. Red Tool Box USA has a license from Stanley to produce these Stanley-yellow rakes, hoes, shovels, even pails and wheelbarrows! And they aren't just for the gardening—there's a full line of screwdrivers and carpentry items. These are real, long-lasting tools that kids can use to explore their imaginations. Impressive. www.stanleyjr.com

For the Rock Lover

These hefty cobbles have been harvested from authentic New Hampshire granite and carefully carved with a channel to hold a beverage tap and bottle. Why? Well, it's a must-have conversation piece for someone who likes to entertain, for one. Retailing at around \$130, it's available in four different colors of granite. Be sure to stock their Booze Cubes, too—a water-free way to cool a cocktail. funkyrockdesigns.com

Hip Hops

Sandy Ridge Farms in Zeeland, Michigan, is offering one of the trendiest plants around—hops! They got started in

hops—in addition to their other greenhouse crops—about 11 years ago when the owner began beer brewing as a hobby. Now they offer 22 different varieties (out of a stash of 40 that they grow) under the Craft Garden brand, which has some attractive and informative POP. Order as few as one or two trays of six of a single variety, or get an entire pallet of 288 pots. sandyridgefarmsinc.com



Pretty Pillows

From Manual Woodworkers & Weavers of North Carolina comes these “Climaweave” outdoor pillows, which feature colorful prints from noteworthy regional designers, such as these “Lovitude” pillows by Minneapolis’ Anne Pryor. At just \$13.50 wholesale you can compete with big retailers without looking like them. shop.manualww.com

Appealing Apparel

When have you ever heard the term “apres-gardening apparel”? The folks at Garden Freak may have coined the term for post-gardening clothing—dresses, tees and such—that is as stylish as it is comfy. They also have gardening activewear as well: gloves, hats, bags—even leggings with knee pads and a pruner pouch. It’s not all for gals, either. There’s a men’s T-shirt that says, “Grow a Pear.” gardenfreak.com

What a Dome

The Superdome polytunnel from BioGreen is a season-extending tunnel that’s built to be taller, longer and stronger than competing tunnels. At 10 ft. long it has two openings per side, sealed wires, 4-in. grounding stakes and is made from a tear-resistant, UV-stabilizing poly with a shade strip on top. It even has a handy off-season storage bag. www.biogreen-products.com



Save the Car Roofs!

Don’t toss that scratchy Christmas tree on the roof of your customer’s nice Volvo when you can wrap it in the Tree Transporter. Made of tough fabric with integral straps, Tree Transporter snugly wraps your Christmas tree and securely attaches it to any roof rack, for scratch-free transport. (It works with baled greens, too!). The manufacturer will even put your store logo on it. Cost is about \$20 wholesale. www.treetransporter.com

Best Rain Gauge Gets Better

The solid copper World's Coolest Rain Gauge has been around since 2001, and it really is cool! But at close to \$60 retail, it's not been for everybody. Now there's an ABS plastic version that comes with a deck mount, or a stake mount like the original. Just \$10 wholesale for the deck mount or \$15 for the stake mount, which brings the price in range of more customers. And even in plastic, it's still the World's Coolest Rain Gauge.

worldscoolestraingauge.com

Sassy Soil Line

Spiked Soil is another new company that is making no bones about appealing to the female demographic. With "Skinnygirl"-esque graphics and cocktail-associated names, the company is reaching out to those young to middle-aged woman who like to pot and pour. The alcohol theme sticks to the product names only—Dirt Martini, Another Round and Bloom Booze. The products are meant to provide a simple three-step process of potting and fertilizing. It's all organic and stuffed with mycorrhizae. spikedsoil.com

The Best of IGC—As Chosen by You

The New Product and New Plant Zones located in the New Vendor Zone were gathering places where vendors placed their latest and greatest offerings for all to see. It was also the space where the IGC Show organizers gave you, the retailers, the opportunity to vote for your favorite new product and new variety. Who took home the accolades?

New Product Zone



First Place—TrashCan Fertilizer from TrashCan LLC.

This brand-new, all-purpose 4-4-4 organic fertilizer is made using recovered food waste. In fact, at 30%, food waste is this fertilizer's No. 1 ingredient. There's also a good supply of soil-building micronutrients and other organic ingredients to produce a balanced blend. And there's no "Number 2," i.e. no animal by-products, which is a growing concern among consumers. Two additional formulations are waiting in the wings.

Second Place—Grass Flip Flops from GFF.

Love that feeling of walking barefoot across the lawn? Grass Flip Flops are nearly that comfy. These sandals have synthetic grass lining the foot bed to make for a comfortable fit. A nice gift item for women, men and children and can be used at home, on the patio or during a spa day. Three color choices.



New Plant Zone



First Place—Hollywood Hibiscus Collection from J. Berry Nursery.

These tropical standouts with large, showy flowers, lots of buds and blooms and the best colors have been a fan favorite since their recent introduction a few years ago. What is new with the Hollywoods is its availability as 50-count plugs from Botany Lane. Growers can bring in these plugs in early summer for quick-turn summer and fall sales in Midwest and more northerly locations. Producing Hollywood Hibiscus closer to the local sales markets for summer and fall sales will cut down on freight costs, and produce fresh, frequent orders for retailers.

Second Place—Endless Summer Hydrangeas Summer Crush from Bailey Nurseries.

The fifth member of Bailey's Endless Summer line of *Hydrangea macrophylla*, Summer Crush is the only raspberry-colored mophead in the reblooming hydrangea category. It's hardy to Zone 4 and is said to be the most wilt-resistant Endless Summer variety to date. And it's compact for containers and small-space gardens! **GP**