greenPROFIT

Features

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# Tropical Treats

*Chris Beytes*

The nursery and landscape folks may beat us to the punch for the first trade shows of the year (MANTS, Mid-Am and National Green Centre come to mind). But that's okay, because while they've got Baltimore, Chicago and Kansas City, we in floriculture, appropriately enough, have Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and the Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition as our first national event of the year.

TPIE always draws an enthusiastic crowd, and this year was no exception. Attendees reported an excellent show, some saying the most upbeat and fruitful in several years. That's especially true if you were shopping for plants with which to fill your garden center. Each year, retail consultant Robert Hendrickson enlists a group of retailers to prowl the show floor in search of livegood and hardgood gems for TPIE's "Cool New Products" award—products they think have strong money-making potential—"slam-dunk retail sales," as Robert puts it. Here are some of their finds, along with a few from *Green Profit's* staff.

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**DeLeon's. Bromeliads in matching pots is nothing new.** But here it's very well executed. Bromeliad specialist DeLeon's offers high-quality bromeliads in matching powder-coated clay pots. It saves the retailer the work of finding matching pots and provides a higher-value product for the end consumer. www.deleons4color.com

**Bulldog and Masdevallia Orchids.** From Turtle Pond Orchids in Delray Beach, Florida, these large-flowered, complex-hybrid paphiopedilum orchids are called "bulldogs," no doubt for their big, wide flowers. And for something truly unusual, masdevallia orchids. What's nice is that owner Scott Glazer says he can ship these to you in 30-count cases, mixed varieties, with just a one-case minimum. www.turtlepondorchids.com

**Kiwi braids.** Again showing that what's old is new, the company Foliage Plants (how's that for a straightforward name?) got attention for their cordyline Kiwi braids, along with cordyline Red Sister and hibiscus. I guess it's hard to find growers putting the labor and time into growing these upright plant forms. www.foliageplantsinc.com

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**Caladium White Out.** From Oglesby, this is the funkiest little caladium you'll ever see—with "little" being the operative word. Called *Caladium humboldtii* Marcel (for Marcel Lecoufle, who originally found this mutation in tissue culture), it's got tiny leaves on a perfect miniature plant, great for windowsills or fairy gardens. They're just coming into production at Oglesby, so it may take a while to get some. www.oglesbytc.com

**A new kind of green wall.** A new way to work plants into a home's décor is with these "Shadowboxes" by Chamberlain's Exotic Foliage. Available in black, brown and white, these frames turn small foliage plants into art.

**Batson's Itty Bittys.** With terrariums and fairy gardens so hot, it's not wonder Batson introduced this line of 2 -in. foliage plants and ferns, and no wonder they were picked as at TPIE Cool New Product. Packed 88 per tray and priced at $0.75 to $0.90. www.batsononline.com

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**This medinilla is magnifica.** Actually, they all are—that's the species name. But this one is available; it's from Northland Floral of St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Medinilla is a spectacular tropical shrub that makes a great patio or house plant. Also called Malaysian orchid, the flowers last for up to four months. www.northlandfloral.ca

**Green Greetings.** Green Profit picked this one for its cross-merchandising appeal—live plants in the greeting card department. Each cardboard pot cover has a holiday greeting on it. Slated currently for Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Christmas. We've heard it's already going into Walmart and Home Depot. www.delrayplants.com

**Orange anthurium.** Columnist Kerry Herndon took us on a whirlwind tour of the Twyford booth to show off several new varieties, including a mini anthurium for 3-in. pots and one called Black Cherry, with dark burgundy foliage. But our favorite was Orange Glow, with vivid orange blooms. www.kerrys.com **GP**