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Features

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IGC Show Coverage: Double Vision

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We had feet on the ground at both IGC shows again this year, and came across some pretty cool finds. IGC East is still the show with a more regional draw, while the Chicago event draws attendees internationally; however, it's only the second year for East, so that's definitely to be expected. A roomier, more familiar location at the Baltimore Convention Center (home of MANTS in the winter) made for an easier spot this year to get in and out of travel-wise. East also offered a full educational program as well as powerful keynote speakers like Martha Stewart, Lloyd Traven (see Jen P.'s First column on his talk and Ellen's article on unique plants that came as a result) and Robert Hendrickson.

Chicago's show, this year being the 9th year, was as dynamic as ever, with solid foot traffic and a wealth of vendors. We already have the dates for next year's shows to put on your calendar: Chicago is back at Navy Pier August 16-18, 2016 and IGC East is returning to the Baltimore Convention Center with an earlier date of July 26-28, 2016.

And now, on to the products:






Gardening for the Next Gen

Created by a Millennial for, well, everyone, actually, Seedsheet can be considered the "Anywhere Garden," according to founder Cam MacKugler of Vermont. Cam, who has a background in sustainable architecture and has a passion for problem solving, created the concept of a pre-fab garden of seeds embedded in a weed barrier sheet. Consumers roll out the mat overtop soil and bam, let the weed-free growing begin. "We're trying to remove the barriers connected with whole food," Cam says. All the seeds are certified 100% organic non-GMO and there are 16 different SKUs for compatibility to all growing regions. There are 41 different types of plants and multiple sizes, from a windowsill -sized 1-ft. by 3ft. herb sheet up to a 10-ft. by 16-ft. size for the backyard that contains 311 plants. The products come from Cam's company Cloudfarm, which initially started with a Kickstarter campaign and then garnered $500,000 in investor funds. seedsheets.com

Flex Your Muscle

But not while you're watering. The Flexzilla hose (which is just a great name, by the way) is made of a premium hybrid polymer that allows it to stay flexible in all weather and won't kink under pressure. P. Allen Smith has partnered with Legacy Manufacturing on a new line that has all the same features as Flexzilla, and comes in four colors: Green Envy, Crazy for Cocoa, Coral Candy and Blue Skies. Called the Watercolors Collection, these hoses also have SwivelGrip technology on both ends, allowing it to connect easily to the spigot and garden attachments. Another cool feature is it's drinking water safe, so you can relive your childhood by drinking from the hose after you water.

watercolorscollection.com

Heavenly Scents

The new Garden Voyage Botanicals line of chemical-free, triple-milled soap are vegetable-based and lightly scented. The triple-milled process means it won't get goopy on your soapdish.) They come in 5 oz. Peppermint, Lavender and Gardener's soap, all individually wrapped for a great gift or impulse purchase. Garden Voyage also launched a holiday set of 3 oz. soaps in Peppermint, Bayberry and Evergreen. They are sold individually or in a gift set. All are made in one of two factories in Vermont and North Carolina. Gardenvoyage.com






Fabulous Foliage

Gardeners aren't just looking for blooms anymore, and foliage with great colors and textures are hot. Foliera is a Canadian company that launched the Atlas Collection of unique, easy-care plants, including begonias, ferns, tropicals and succulents. "We felt tropicals and succulents didn't have good branding," explained President John Kouwenberg, who says each plant's origin is on the tag ID with a stamp a la a passport. It includes the botanical name, care instructions and a website, which is populated with consumer-friendly "how-to's" and stories. Foliera.com

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While at the Overdevest Nurseries booth, there was a discussion raging about what retailers and consumers can do with the new Etera Sedum tiles. They are carpet-like tiles of sedum blends grown on a coconut fiber base that can be used in a wide variety of ways, from the more traditional green roof to more stylish options like rock gardens, fairy gardens, wall art and more. Overdevest displayed the tile, pictured here, in a repurposed picture frame. The opportunities are endless. Overdevestnurseries.com

Ergo, More Comfort

Bayer Advanced introduced new ergo-grip sprayer technology for five of its existing products, allowing consumers to comfortably spray for longer. The products getting the new ergo-grip treatment are: DuraZone Weed & Grass Killer, Brush Killer, Lawn Weed & Crabgrass Killer, Home Pest Control and the Carpenter Ant & Termite Killer Plus. The ergo-grip wands are battery powered (batteries included) and fold up to fit into a pocket in the new bottles.






Sitting Pretty

This is the most unique product I've seen at a trade show in a long time: trees trained to bend in the shape of a chair. They are the brainchild of Don Eaton at Eaton Farms, and right now there are five different varieties to choose from, with about 400 tree chairs available for Spring 2016. Next year there will be 10 varieties and lots more availability. I sat in the tree, and I have to say, I felt like a kid again climbing up there and sitting among the leaves. If you're looking for wow factor, this might be the ticket. Eaton Farms grower Seth Eaton is pictured. Eatonfarms.com

For the Kiddos

As a mom, I tend to look for items my kids might like. I found some at the TDI Brands (Tierra-Derco International) booth in the Briers children's line of gardening tools. They are well made (not cheap plastic) and sturdy, designed to do the gardening we'd like to see our kids doing. Originally from the U.K., Tierra-Derco will be distributing them in the United States starting this fall. "They are functional and fun," notes Paula Schmidt, director of marketing and business development at TDI Brands. There are six types of gloves in fun patterns (think dinosaurs and cats), as well as bright-colored tools like a spade, rake, trowel, brush and more. Tdibrands.com

The Dress That Gives Back

Here's apparel from Ivy & Alex that does more than make little girls look even more adorable. Ivy stands for "I Value You" and Alex is the young lady who started the project because she wanted to do something to help others in her community and around the world. The dresses are reversible and come in four different colors, each representing a different charity that the money goes toward from every purchase—blue provides clean water, green provides nutritious food, and pink provides schooling and healthcare to the needy in a third world country. Money from the purchases of the red dresses goes to helping a needy community in North America. Retailers who purchase the display get an offset of free dresses. There are also reversible hats and headbands you can add separately. The dresses grow with the child—from dress to tunic to top—and come in two sizes: 2 to 5 years and 5 to 8 years. www.ivyandalexproject.com






Get the Great Pumpkin's Attention

Something that caught our eye were these giant lanterns and chimeneas shaped like Jack-O-Lanterns from The Pottery Patch. We can't decide if the chimenea would be cool or frightening when there's a fire inside of it. www.thepotterypatch.com

More Sweet Charity

Another company who's using their product to help others is third-generation business Bentley Seeds, one of the largest producers of customer seed packets in the country. (Like, if you want 200 seed packets with Uncle Murray's picture on them to commemorate his 90th

birthday, you call them. They can handle small volume orders.) They're bringing a new look to their retail packet displays that they say targets Millennials. They have a variety of display sizes, from 500 packets to one that holds 2,000, and they don't charge you for the displays or the shipping—just the base wholesale price of 60 cents a packet.

And for every packet purchased, Bentley donates a packet to local and national charities. They'll even work with a local charity of your choice and customize the display signage to say that. They can also adjust the assortment to suit your region and customers' tastes. Oh, and they only sell to IGCs, so you won't find Bentley seeds in a big box store. bentleyseeds.com

Hidden Hideaway

Is it a tree trunk or is it a storage shed? It's both! The Surreal Storage Shed from Nature Innovations offers a clever and attractive way to hide unattractive tools and other things you keep in your shed. It would look nice at the garden center in an outdoor retail area for hoses and other essentials that are a pain to haul back and forth. And you can carry a few to offer to your customers for their backyards. Comes in two sizes. surrealplanters.com/product-shed






Copper and Iron Fire Pits

We asked Erkut "Eric" Aribas of Jatex International where these big chunky fire pits and ice buckets are made. "Turkey," he answered. "But they aren't simply 'made,'" he said with disdain. Okay, we get it: Crafted. Hammered. Forged. Those are better words to describe the construction of something that a clan of Viking warriors would gather around to warm themselves. And not all of their designs are quite so medieval; you can see some sleeker designs in the back where the woman is shopping. www.jatexinternational.com

Garden Vessels

Also chunky are these "garden vessels" from Terra Design featuring rustic glazes and interesting lettering, such as "Napa Valley Reserve" on the sideways wine bottle planters and "Sethersford Farmhouse Cider" on the crocks. www.terraproducts.com

Vintage-Style Lights

Bare, vintage light bulbs are very in. But where do you find them? Tiab Inc. has 13 different shapes and sizes, all of which screw into a standard socket (Tiab sells those, too, with a black socket and 10-ft. cord). The combination bulb/socket looks expensive, but we were told the wholesale price is just $15 to $20. They also have strings of lights for that hip alfresco dining look. www.tiabinc.com



Steamed Dandelions

Yes, it's a recipe … a recipe for killing weeds! DynaSteam from Dynamic Solutions Worldwide is a steam generator for killing weeds at the surface (with a cone-shaped adapter) or at the roots (with this steam-injecting probe). The key: their steamer operates at a much higher temperature (300F and 65 psi) than lesser units. Oh, you can get attachments for steam-cleaning your floors and bathrooms, too, so it's not just a $249.95 replacement for a $10 dandelion fork. But you have to admit: that blast of steam will impress the neighbors! www.dynatrap.com/dynasteam

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