

Features

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A Cure for the Winter Blahs

Chris Beytes, Ellen C. Wells & Jennifer Polanz

Chances are you may have hit some of the winter trade shows this year, considering the weather treated us fairly kindly (at least during the shows). Just in case, we journeyed to several of them to find what's new and unique, and to hear what people are talking about for 2016.



NEW ENGLAND GROWS

With a shift in dates to the first week after Thanksgiving, New England Grows remains a winter show (technically late fall), but with decidedly less of a chance of being impacted by Boston's notoriously snowy February winters. December 2015 was the show's first December occurrence, and both attendees and vendors are adjusting to the new schedule. It'll be interesting to see how the vendors shake out for 2016 in the new schedule's second year.

The show was dominated by the landscape and arborist trade, but Green Profit did spy a good number of retail-appropriate products; mainly, composts, soils and fertilizers.

Coast of Maine (pictured)—The marine-based compost, mulch and soil company has several new products, including a line of four new organic soil supplements, including Lobster, Kelp, Fish Bone and Alfalfa Meals. It's hard to make bagged goods pretty, but they sure did with some colorful and eye-catching illustrations. Coast of Maine is also offering a new organic soil formulated to feed a cannabis plant for one full growth cycle. It's called the Stonington Blend, an homage to Stonington, Maine (not what you think it might refer to!).

Sea Method—Another new product and company with consumer-savvy, Maine-based Sea Method is currently producing a liquid fish fertilizer made from dogfish, a small shark found in New England waters. It's a fish that's used infrequently in the culinary world and is essentially a "junk" fish caught by fishermen as they fish for cod. Rather than disposing of this nitrogen-rich fish, the folks at Sea Method are turning it into fertilizer.

Green Mountain Compost—This isn't new, but the name (formerly Intervale Compost) and its production facility in Williston, Vermont, are. Green Mountain Compost is currently at retail in Vermont, New Hampshire and one or two places in Massachusetts, but they're looking to expand throughout New England.

MANTS

Attendance at this show, which takes place every January in Baltimore, was very steady, clocking in at around 11,000 people. The floor was packed and the general consensus was positive from attendees and vendors. New products included:

Raemelon Farm—Owner Steve Black announced his Maryland nursery's launch of USDA-certified organic trees, the first in the nation. "Consumers are concerned about where their products come from," he says, noting hot-button concerns like non-GMO, pollinator protection and carbon footprint. "These trees address this." The line includes shade, ornamental and fruit-bearing trees and are available now in multiple sizes.



BloomPad North America (pictured)—From the makers of BloomPad (the product from last year that made planting bulbs easier) comes Seeds Are Easy, a fun kit with great packaging. This kit allows novice and experienced growers alike to grow plants inside or outside in this plastic-lined bag. The media, seeds and instructions are included. Two assortments of 15 kits are available: Tea Rag Bag with five different tea-related plants (Lavender, Chamomile, Lemon Balm,

Thyme and Mint) and Herbs Burlap Bag, with five herb plants (Garden Sage, Corn Parsley, Sail Genovese, Celery and Chive).

Plantbid—This growing company connects landscape contractors looking for material with wholesale growers. It's a unique use of technology that helps landscapers find what they need while connecting them to the growers who have it. The grower network totals about 1,800 so far, and Plantbid continues to look for and add new growers. The program is free for growers to use and they receive an email asking them to respond to an RFP. The grower can modify the list, make notes on the plants and pitch alternative plants. They can use computers or an app on tablets and smartphones. "You still have a relationship between the landscaper and grower; we're not trying to own the transaction," explains COO Peter Bodenheimer. "We're trying to put the right people together." In 2015, 235 nurseries and growers sold just over \$1.6 million in material to customers they'd never worked with before because of Plantbid, Peter adds.

Living Fences—Hardy to Zone 5, these "fences" are designed for commercial applications and consumer/retail uses. They can be used as graffiti blocks on commercial buildings or to section off patios for restaurants. On the consumer side they can be used for privacy or to cover unsightly aspects of a house. The bottom is a coco-fiber base, which holds galvanized mesh onto which the ivy is trained. It comes in three sizes (4-ft. by 4-ft., 4-ft. by 6-ft. and 4-ft. by 8-ft.) and can include castors to roll it or decorative boxes for indoor use. There are several distributors, including Acorn Farms, Prides Corner Farms, Shemin Landscape Supply, Russell's Tree & Shrub Farm, Hanging Tree Nursery and Lake & Wetland Management.

TPIE

The annual Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition, one of two shows run by the Florida Nursery, Growers &

Landscape Association, is aiming to become the hot trend destination for the North American horticulture industry. And with keynote speakers like Dutch trend analyst Christine Boland and a plethora of international plant and product exhibitors, they're succeeding! Christine's opening-morning trend talk couldn't have been more inspiring, agreed everyone we asked who had attended.

To us, what was most inspiring about her talk was how the most important current consumer need seems to play right into our hands. She listed them thusly: "Longing for Grip," "Desire for the Human Scale," "Rediscovering the Senses," "Striving for Balance," "Defining a Personal Pace/Rhythm," "Taking Responsibility," "Reconnecting to Nature" and "Cultivating the Uncomplicated."

When you think about it, that describes a day at the garden center! Load your family into the SUV on a Saturday morning, visit a good IGC, shop for some beautiful flowers and plants and spend the rest of the day in your garden planting, teaching, playing and generally enjoying life, and you can check off every one of them!

Wonder Fleur Scent & Flower Collection—New Jersey grower Plainview Growers has the exclusive on this hip European product that combines a micro-mini phalaenopsis orchid with scent sticks, packed in a nice box that makes it easy to display and easy to give as a gift.



Glass-bottomed cloche terrariums—Gail Cash, owner of Flori-Design of Eustis, Florida, always offers something new in dish gardens and terrariums, and she's won best booth and cool product awards at TPIE for four years running based on that. This year was no exception, with two more ribbons for her collection. One was for these cloche terrariums. Judges especially liked their clear glass bases, which offer a peek at the soil and roots.

Hip Hops—Plant propagator Agri-Starts was simply filling the need for Florida-grown hops plants for the state's burgeoning local brew market. But add this clever POP from MasterTag and you get the perfect Father's Day or home brewer gift.

Exact Mix hose-end feeder (pictured)—Jack Peters (pictured) says he's long been asked to offer a hose-end feeder to accompany his Jack's Classic line of water soluble plant food, but existing products just didn't meet his high standards. Now's he's got one that does, meaning it keeps a consistent feed ratio going even as the bottle empties. Also new: Jack's Classic Tomato FeED 12-15-30. "Fe" indicates additional iron and micronutrients that tomatoes need. **GP**