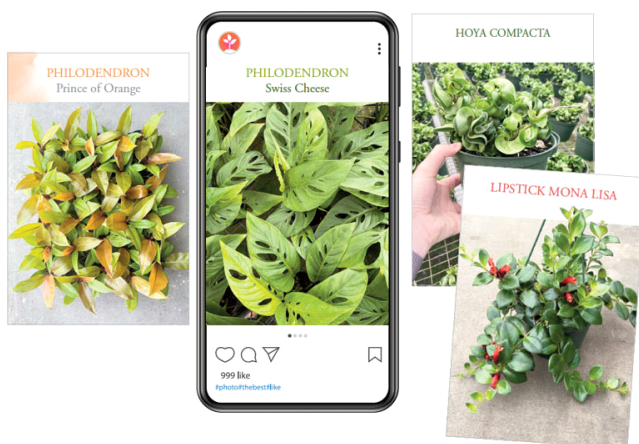


Features

5/1/2020

Insta-Worthy Houseplants

Jennifer Polanz



It's spring and most retailers are focused on trying to sell the usual outdoor livegoods essentials (in a very atypical retail environment).

However, in this COVID-19 lockdown-ish era, consumers are still scrolling through their Instagram feeds dreaming of houseplants. In fact, social media sites have become more vital than ever in communicating what you have for sale and are an even more important part of your houseplant strategy. With customers in some locations unable (or unwilling) to enter the store, it's imperative you bomb their feed with these indoor beauties (and then offer curbside pickup).

So which ones still resonate? That's what we asked retailers and suppliers, and in some cases the answers overlapped. Dave Williams of Williams Nursery in Westfield, New Jersey, noted that plants like calatheas, hoyas and peperomias are still flying off the shelves and getting hearts all over Instagram.

At Florico Foliage in Apopka, Florida, they're seeing similar demand from retailers. "Our retail customers are always looking for the next hottest item in foliage or anything that is very rare or hard to find," confirms Morgan McComas, a sales rep at Florico. Morgan notes the following are their most popular items:

- Hoyas—Hindu Rope, Carnosa, Wyetti, Kentiana, Jade and Exotica. "The variegated varieties are definitely the most popular, as they are the hardest to obtain, but our green Hindu Rope has great popularity due to the unique shape of the leaves and vines," Morgan says.
- Philodendron Swiss Cheese—very popular for its holey leaves and vining
- String of Pearls
- Pothos—"Not as rare as the others, but seems to be a staple in the foliage world," Morgan adds.

Rare vs. Popular

That brings up an interesting conundrum. There are rare plants that hard-core houseplant collectors are looking for,

and then there are the everyday favorites that drive Instagram traffic and prompt customers to buy. It's important not to get too focused on the rare and unusual, but instead have a balance of both.

According to Will Heeman of Heeman's Garden Center in London, Ontario, the plants that garner the most attention on his Instagram account are generally more widely available ones, not necessarily the rare.

"I find the most Insta-worthy continue to be the things people know the most—not the cool new ones, but the cool ones they can at least recall in their mind,," he says.

That means Philodendron Birkin or Monstera Thai Constellation are popular with die-hard collectors, but are too niche for his general audience. However, the mainstays like fiddle-leaf fig (of course), Lifesaver Plant and Raven ZZ all rank highly in his posts.

Dave also noted that he has some mainstays that continue to sell through well, like sansevieria and Hindu Rope.

"I don't necessarily think it's a bad thing that there's commodity cool plants," he adds. "The key in houseplants is getting people excited in the moment."

He agrees, too, that anything variegated is quite popular. Others on Dave's list that sell through well include Peperomia prostrata (string of pearls), Wandering Jew and white bird of paradise, as well as Ficus Audrey.

When you're posting your plants or availability lists on your website, Facebook or other social media, don't forget your houseplants. It may seem like May is for annuals and veggie starts, but you might be surprised how many are looking to beautify the inside right along with the outside. And don't forget to continue care tips via posts and videos. They're helpful to newbies and more experienced plant parents alike. **GP**