

Cover Story

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Trending Now: Hot Products for 2021

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Virtual trade shows and virtual exhibits don't have virtual products. The computer screens between the sellers and the buyers are just portals for the very real transactions of very real goods. The world may have slowed down a bit due to COVID-19 but business moves on.

That is evidenced by the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show, the Tropical Plant International Expo and the numerous new product announcements that come across the desks of Ball Publishing editors. We entered those portals, read the news releases and crawled the Interwebs to find the following retail-related products just in time for spring.



Hibiscus

Two new shrub hibiscus from Star Roses and Plants' Head Over Heels collection will appeal to any garden palette. *Dream* features large, white flowers with red centers against burgundy foliage. *Desire* has large, saucer-shaped, scarlet-colored blooms with rich, burgundy foliage and is a dense, compact plant. Both work great in containers and in the garden. starrosesandplants.com

Plant Supports

If you played with Tinkertoys or Construx kits in the '80s like I did, these will make you nostalgic. C-BITE garden clips from Thriving Design are a customizable, sustainable and reusable alternative to traditional plant supports. They click together in over 140 different ways and connect garden stakes together to create your own trellises, tomato cages and other types of support. They say they're durable enough to last for years across all four seasons and are available in different colors like tangerine orange, lime green or an "incognito green" that blends in with foliage and garden stakes. Thriving Design, the company that makes C-BITES, has committed to donating a portion of its sales to environmental causes and to fighting hunger. They've also partnered with KidsGardening to bring C-BITES plant support kits to 25 youth gardening programs across the United States in 2021. thrivingdesign.com



Nutrient Kits

Soil and nutrient company Whole Gardener is introducing two organic fertilizer and soil amendment kits that allow consumers to create their own planting mixes for any crop in their garden. Targeted to serious gardeners, organic gardeners and anyone concerned about the environment, the Organic Plant Nutrient Kit is the flagstone product for Whole Gardener and it contains: four nutrient products (Simply Nitrogen, Simply Phosphorous, Simply Potassium and Simply Micros); a mixing “recipe” book for 200 plants; measuring cups; applicator; soil pH strips; and a signature tote. Other products sold separately include Simply Gypsum, Simply Humic, Simply Soil Acidifier and Simply Soil Neutralizer. wholegardener.com

Hedge Shears

These Wavy Blade Italian Pro Hedge Shears are designed and produced by a small, family-owned forge in Maniago, Italy, a region renowned for its great tools. The shears are created for vineyards, so their heavy-duty design can handle most yard and garden tasks. The wavy, tapered blades are forged of carbon steel, and accurately sharpened to better grip narrow branches while cutting. Strong, lightweight aluminum handles with high-visibility, plastic-coated handgrips, and hefty rubber shock absorbers are just a few other professional features. garrettwade.com

Biological Plant Food

Arber is a company that’s so new they only have one page on their website! Coming this spring is a new line of environmentally friendly fertilizer and bio-stimulants—what they’re calling “plant wellness products.” Made with patented biological ingredients that they say perform equal to or better than current synthetic chemicals, the four different products offer a natural solution for home gardeners while keeping people, pets, pollinators and the planet safe. growarber.com



Azaleas

Two new varieties join the Encore family of reblooming azaleas this year. *Autumn Majesty* has bright green foliage and is filled with petite purple semi-double blooms, giving the flowers a ruffled appearance. *Autumn Starburst*’s dark green foliage is offset by its bicolor flowers, which feature a star-shaped coral-pink center edged in white. Both are about 3 ft. tall and wide and are among the more cold-hardy of the Encore azalea line—now at a whopping 33 varieties! encoreazalea.com.

Aglaonema

Costa Farms' "back room" must be filled with hundreds of "work in progress" aglaonemas because they're able to introduce several new varieties each year. For 2021 they're introducing Ultra Pink, an aglaonema that plant shoppers just won't be able to overlook. Its bold red-pink leaves are edged in a band of green, which really does accentuate the bright leaf color even more. And something even better for consumers—aglaonemas are nearly indestructible (although my cat would try really hard). Ultra Pink is part of Costa's Trending Tropicals collection. costafarms.com

Blueberries

Hello Darlin is a new-to-retail blueberry bush from Southern Living Plant Collection. Hardy to Zones 7a-9b, it's a low-chill hybrid that grows to 4-5 ft. tall and 3-4 ft. wide. It produces a ton of bell-shaped flowers and berries early in its season. Foliage begins vibrant green and transitions to dark red across the seasons. Use singly as an accent plant or use them in multiples to create an edible hedge. southernlivingplants.com.



Planting Soil

Organic soil producer Coast of Maine has three new soil products: one for tomatoes and vegetables, one for acid-loving plants, and one for roses and flowers. All three are soil conditioners made to improve and revitalize the soil in and around the garden. The tomato and vegetable soil contains compost, lobster, peat moss and lime. For plants thrive on lower pH soils—like rhododendrons, azaleas, hollies, blueberries, strawberries, ferns, fuchsias, camellias, dogwoods and conifers—the soil is made with compost, peat moss and aged bark. And the soil for roses and flowers contains compost, peat moss, aged bark and lime. All are available in 20-qt. bags. coastofmaine.com

Minimalist Millennials

Aimed at younger Millennials in their mid-20s who wish to create lush jungles in their small condos, Urban Jungle's products emphasize the plant, not necessarily the pot. New this year in the Earthenware Collection are the Terra Firma gardens, or dish garden-style assortments. They've also added self-watering Basin pots in their terra cotta Artisan Collection and two classic conservatory-style watering cans under Care Essentials. theurbanjungle.com

Halloween

Halloween is fast becoming one of LiveTrends biggest categories. Within the popular holiday category they have two different collections. The Monster Mash collection contains items with fun colors and characters such as Shriek and Boogi, while the Witch's Workshop Collection has items that make you think, "Well, something went a little awry here," such as the adorable-but-scary Monster Cat. livetrendsdesign.com GP