

Front Lines

3/1/2022

Money Tree

Chris Beytes



As a booth judge at the Tropical Plant International Expo, I have to consider the entire booth, not just individual elements. But this creative bromeliad tree (two of them, actually) by Bromeliad Specialties of Homestead, Florida, made me want to lobby for a new category: “Best individual display within a booth.”

To learn more, I spoke with owner Ronald Herndon via phone (he didn't make it to the show) about how the trees came about.

“You only have so much time to catch the customer's eye at these trade shows, so you want to make a

splash,” said Ron. “We were playing with the idea of a tree and we found these on Pinterest. One of our guys hand-traced them out on a piece of plywood and cut them out. There are five of those pieces of plywood to make one tree.”

They hot-glued hundreds of bromeliads (some 40 varieties) onto the trees to finish them. Light poles (just visible in the picture) emerge from the top to illuminate the plants. He credits office/greenhouse manager Guadalupe Gutierrez with spearheading the project.

The challenge came with transportation. They thought about breaking the trees down into their separate limbs and crating them up, but decided it would be faster and easier to make a giant 8 ft. by 8 ft. by 8 ft. crate for each tree and truck them intact from Homestead to Tampa.

Sadly, when it came time to sell the booth at the end of the show, no buyer could figure out how to transport them, even though Ron offered them the giant crates. In the end, they were donated to a local school, who we hope is enjoying them as much as we did.

To use these as a retail display, you'd just have to come up with a way to hang your plants to make them shoppable.

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