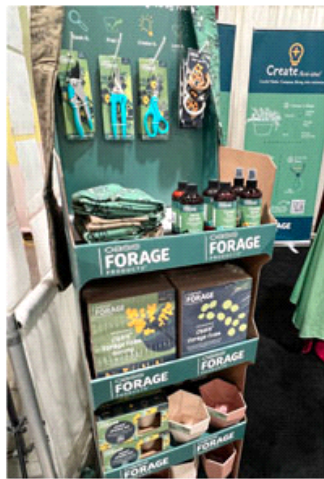


Cover Story

11/1/2023

Hot Picks for Spring (and Beyond)

Chris Beytes



The Garden Center Show

Back in August, I drove north from the Green Profit offices outside of Chicago to Milwaukee for the second edition of The Garden Center Show, held August 8-10 and hosted by SmartWork Media. The show is hoping to fill the gap left by the closing of the IGC Show in Chicago, which shut down due to the combined effects of the pandemic (2020 and 2021 couldn't be held in Chicago) and the move from popular Navy Pier to remote and cavernous McCormick Place.

This year's show was as compact as last year's—54 or so exhibitors on four aisles of the Baird Center in Milwaukee. Attendance was also humble: I counted 103 people in the first morning keynote; I assume about that same number were on the trade show floor afterwards. Still, as they say, it's quality, not quantity, and there were some quality exhibitors and interesting products. I couldn't help but note that the plant companies were attracting attendees, especially the foliage and tropicals companies. From Florida, I saw Dewar Nursery, Bernecker's (a Costa Farms division) and Kreative Gardens (known for their "Root Orbs"). And from Canada, Foliera and Trillium.

A Rare Find

Bernecker's had the plant that I'm sure would have won the Best in Show award had there been one: a stunning 7-gal. (14-in.) *Philodendron giganteum variegata*. Massive—and rare to find, especially this large. Quantities are limited on even the normal size, we're told. berneckers.com

Trendy Mats

DHome Brands, a home décor company out of New Jersey, had some pretty doormats. I wanted this one (and would have bought it had it been the last day!). However, the trendy color right now is neutrals, said Christina

Baumberger. Also popular are seasonal mats that can be changed out regularly. dhomebrands.com

Botanic Puzzles

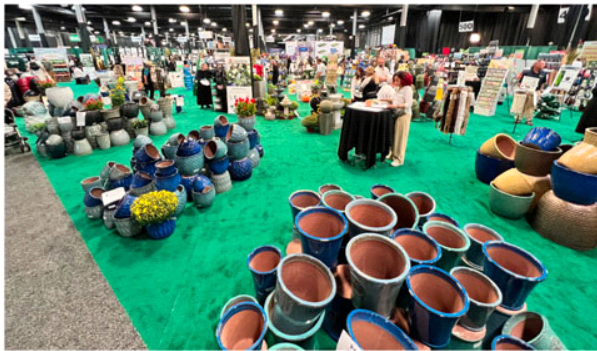
Madd Capp's puzzles and games could be something new for your garden center, especially their puzzles, which are all plant- or animal-themed. The flower puzzles are especially colorful and unique, featuring die-cut outlines (no starting a puzzle by finding the corners!). As a bonus, they include cultural information about the subject. Right now, they're found in high-end shops at zoos and botanical gardens and such, said brothers/founders Bernie and John Moran, but they're looking to expand into garden centers. maddcappgames.com

A Home Floral Line

Forage, from Oasis Floral Products, is a line of florist products designed for the consumer—from clippers to wire and tape to foam, “Finishing Spritz” (anti-desiccant), and containers and complete kits. The Oasis foam is brown instead of green to look more like soil and to help the consumer notice when it dries out and needs water. Forage came about because of the pandemic, when home-bound folks discovered an interest in home floral design. The idea is that you seek out and harvest interesting flowers and foliage in your garden and surrounding environment and create your own floral designs. oasisforageproducts.com

Griffin Expo

Held September 20-21 in Edison, New Jersey, the Griffin Expo is a buying show for customers featuring an impressive 180-vendor trade show, visited by 350 or so companies with anywhere from one to four folks from each company in attendance. The trade show selection was eclectic, everything from automatic transplanters to tin whirligigs.



Two-for-one

Syndicate Home & Garden, a division of Syndicate Sales, showed off two glass-and-terracotta planters, one for bulbs and one a self-waterer for houseplants. They also had a product I'm surprised nobody's done before: A hanging basket with built-in windchimes. Available in two sizes (10 in. and 14 in.), in white or gray. syndicatesales.com

Fizzing Food

The old Alka-Seltzer ad comes to mind when you see Dr. Joe's "Bubble" fertilizer tablets at work. Available in four formulations—Tomato Vegetable Bubble, Blooming Flower Bubble, Growing Bubble (all-purpose) and Nutri Bubble (micronutrients)—the "plop and fizz" concentrated tablets dissolve quickly and thoroughly in a gallon of water. Fourteen tablets in each container. Dr. Joe Products originate from Nousbo Co. Ltd. in South Korea. drjoeplantfood.com

Creative Houseplant Solutions

The guys at Mossify keep getting publicity from us because: 1) They keep finding ways to extend the Mossify brand; and 2) they seem to be at every show we visit. Three new brand extensions include budget-priced wood-handled garden clippers, microfiber gloves

for shining your plant leaves (car detailers love 'em, too), and Velcro plant tie tape. But most interesting is a new line of Thin Moss Poles with adjustable three-prong stakes. They're available in three heights (16 in., 30 in. and 42 in.) and are sold two ways: in three-count boxes for end consumers and in bulk for growers. They say they can keep the prices low enough for any foliage grower to take advantage of their patented bendable support. This is founder Lucas Picciolo and Thiago Jax, head of media, with their newest bendable moss pole creations. mossify.ca

Hillside Options

"Terrace the plant, not the hill," is how they explain the Hillside Planter. It's basically half a hanging basket that you dig into the side of a slope to hold a plant instead of using stone, brick or wood. The inventors say it saves water, too. There are two versions: permanent and biodegradable. The latter is said to last three to five years—long enough to get plants established on the slope. hillside-planter.com GP

