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Features

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# Browsing the Winter Shows

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Once the calendar rolls over to the new year, it's time for us to head out and see what's new at the winter trade shows. While there aren't nearly as many as there used to be, there are still several regional shows, some of which draw a national and international audience. The two we attended this year, MANTS (JP) and TPIE (EW), both fall into that category. Let's start with MANTS, since that's essentially the kickoff to the trade show season.

## MANTS Means Business

*With more than 10,800 registered attendees and more than 890 exhibiting companies, MANTS certainly lived up to its tagline this year. The fact that the show floor is consistently sold out with a waiting list of companies shows it's the place to be. The mood on the floor was reserved, but optimistic. I heard those with diversified businesses had some success last year, as some part of the business were up while other parts were flat or down. We also saw some cool stuff this year.*




**1. Pottery Patch**

I always try to stop at a pottery booth to see what they have that's new and trending. Pottery Patch was featuring these cool pot designs in the Rust Cement Collection, a new mix of limestone and cement with a rust color. There are nine shapes in the collection, including the head, and they come in sets of two nested (except for the head planter). They can be used indoors or outdoors.

**2. Botanical Interests**

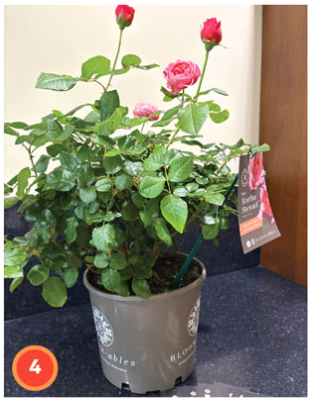
Listening to the needs of consumers, Botanical Interests has introduced a new line of seed shaker canisters holding the equivalent of 10 seed packets (ranging between 100 g and 150 g) in a variety of plant assortments. There are four bestsellers for pollinators and cut flowers, three for alternative lawn options and two for cover crops. Retailers can mix and match or order a pre-packed display caddie.

### 3. Nostrand Benches

The Irish company Nostrand exhibited for the first time at MANTS, showing their ebb-and-flow display benches. I spoke to Director Harry Kilbey in the booth and he said the goal is to provide a solution to a growing problem: labor costs related to watering and plant health. He noted they could reduce retailer watering time by 80% to 85%. The benches come in a couple of different styles, including the Signature Hybrid with an aluminum subframe that can feature a treated wood surround, and the Prestige Aluminum, featuring mill-finished steel or anodized steel. They both have telescoping legs to allow easy adjustment on uneven ground, as well as heavy-duty plastic safety corners and a 10-year warranty. Harry noted the darker-color benches were catching the eye of attendees at the show.

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### 4. Star Roses & Plants




We mentioned this in the magazine last year, but I want to put an emphasis on it because it's a pretty darned big deal: Star Roses is launching the Martha Stewart Rose for 2026. This compact hybrid tea rose offers up tons of apricot-pink blooms and it smells absolutely divine. A blend of lemon verbena, bergamot and honeysuckle notes, it's very fragrant and, according to Jordan Williams, communication manager at Star Roses & Plants, features good disease resistance (including higher blackspot performance compared to older varieties). It also produces more than 100 petals on each bloom. Bred by Meilland, Star Roses & Plants will offer free point-of-purchase materials with it and it'll come in the Bloomables branded pot. Star is planning a consumer ad campaign in home and garden magazines to support the introduction, as well.

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### 5. Bentley Seed Co.




The seed displays in the Bentley Seed Co. booth caught our eye immediately and made us stop (when I say us, I mean Ball Publishing Account Manager Kim Brown and me). We stopped and talked to Katie Bentley, who's the sales and marketing officer and co-owner with her husband. They're third-generation owners of the Upstate New York-based business, which specializes in non-GMO fresh crop seeds. They sell to independent retailers only, Katie said, and offer assortments in lines like the Home Gardener Line of assorted flowers, vegetables and herbs; an Heirloom Collection of 48 varieties designed to look "vintage-y;" and the newest collection: seed packets that feature sentiments for special occasions, so they double as greeting cards. There's an assortment of wildflowers, sunflowers and forget-me-nots in a variety of sentiments from "Oh Baby" and "Congrats" to "Thank You," "Love," "Sympathy" and more.

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# TPIE

*The Tropical Plant International Expo may have lush plants in every aisle, but the show is more than just tropical plants. Exhibitors of hardgoods appropriate for the garden center world are everywhere and many of these folks are exhibiting at a plant industry show for the very first time. The folks at The Garden Center Group are well aware of that and for the 16th time saw fit to present the Cool Product Awards at the show. The non-plant Cool Product Awards are presented below.*

*Show attendees also had the opportunity to weigh in on what they liked for the show's Favorite Trending Plants and Products awards, and the non-plant winners are included here, as well.*

## Cool New Product Winners

**1. BWH Plant. Co.**

BWH Plant Co. started as many young, entrepreneurial plant businesses do—in a pull-behind trailer set up at breweries and other venues selling plants. The trailer led to DTC sales that then led to their own plant store and now their own products. Their line of soil mixes and amendments—Dirt Bag, Coco Bag and Sphag Bag—are simply, yet boldly, packaged—and you just can't forget a name like Dirt Bag.

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**2. Banana Bloom**

The long-story-made-short for Banana Bloom Natural Soil Booster from Banana Bloom is this: The father of this company's founders took the family to live on a working banana farm in Nicaragua for several years. Presented with a surplus of harvested banana trunks, they found a second use for the fiber as a soil amendment. The hydrophilic fiber holds onto moisture much more efficiently than peat moss or coconut coir, so you'll use less of it. Plus, it's regenerative and doesn't require chemical processing. Look for "chunkier" versions to come out in the future.

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**3. Floratrel**

The unique designs of Floratrel's trellises, supports, plant stakes and more are all crafted from bamboo. All of the products are laser cut at the company's facility in Maryland. I was impressed with the array of designs they had on display in their booth. They even offer custom creations. That would be a great idea for special events at your garden center. All of the in-soil portions of the supports are protected with a coating for longer life.

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**4. GOHA**

GOHA founder Kieran Collins created the Leaf Sweep as an easy way to clean leaves and other portions of indoor plants. Picture a pair of simple kitchen tongs, but with soft pads—two different types, one for wet, one for dry—on the working ends to dust and clean leaves. The brush heads can swivel to present two different sizes of swiping widths depending on leaf size. Appropriate for interiorscapers, too.




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**5. Henri Studio**

Henri Studio's designers are always imagining such creative products! Think of "The Dude" as a Big Lebowski-type gnome, livin' his life as carefree as can be. That includes wearing shades, flip-flops and floral swim trunks being pulled down by a little crab attached to his rear. Dude, so cool! He's handmade of cast stone and finished in a Greystone paint wash. And as Henri Studio is proud to say, The Dude and all the other products they offer are made of American products and made right in America!




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**6. Naked Root**

Naked Root founders Frank and Lisa created their slotted pot-in-pot root-pruning pots to allow roots to breathe more freely, avoid water-logged soils and to encourage air root pruning. They put a lot of hard work, research and joyful enthusiasm into the design and are always thinking of new forms that will benefits gardeners of all types. These are available in several different sizes and colors. And if you can't tell from the photo, the pots are translucent so you can see the water level. Also made in America!

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**7. Sol Soils**

Sol Soils has already taken home quite a few awards from TPIE and other shows for their lines of soil mix-ins and amendments. This time they were awarded for their repotting scoop and teaspoon/soil pick. Use the scoop to carefully place soil into pots when repotting. The double-ended device is a teaspoon to measure out their Sol Biotics products and the other end is a pick with which you can poke around in the soil and so forth.

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## Favorite Trending Product Awards

*These are essentially People's Choice-type awards, voted on by attendees as they stroll through the Product Showcase display.*




**8. Cabinotier**

The SUS-tee Watering Checker from Cabinotier has won Cool Product and Retailers' Choice Awards in previous shows. What's new is that they're now offering replacement filters. These filters should be replaced every six months or so. For folks who don't want to needlessly throw out/recycle plastic before absolutely necessary, these are a welcome addition.




**9. Costa Farms**

Costa Farms received the award for their new Twist.Lift.Water. Pot. The design was driven by consumer feedback on their challenges when using self-watering pots. Users can twist the top ring and lift it and the inside grower pot off the solid pot. The user can then refill the reservoir, reinsert the grower pot and twist it locked. It’s available in two sizes, two pot designs and two colors. **GP**