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Features

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5 Unique Houseplants

Matthew Olson

As I was reading the “2026 Garden Trends Report” from Garden Media Group, one trend that caught my eye was the personal museum approach to growing plants—also known as collecting. Consumers, especially Gen Z and Millennials, are looking for ways to express themselves, and houseplant collections provide that opportunity. I visited with four wholesalers to learn about unique collectible plants you can add to your offerings.



Begonia ferox

Shortly before COVID began, Mark Leichty, the Director of Business Development at Little Prince of Oregon, took a trip to the Amazon Spheres in Seattle to check out their tropical gardens. Among the 40,000 plants, he found a begonia with bizarre spikes on the leaves.

“It was so cool!” he recalled. “I started searching high and low to figure out where to get one. A friend of mine in horticulture had a plant, and I got a leaf from him.” From that leaf, he grew nine cuttings over the next year before sending them to a tissue culture lab. “They were successful in the lab, so we started buying stage 3 tissue culture by the thousand. The sales have taken off ever since.”

Until 2011, *Begonia ferox* was unknown to botanists. It was found growing in a southern province of China (Guangxi), where the climate is exceptionally warm and humid. After being formally recognized in 2013, the species reached the U.S.

For a while, this plant was exclusive to only a few nurseries, but now it’s more widely available. “When we started selling these, the wholesale price was close to $50 for a 4-in. pot,” Mark said. “Now our price is about $7 for that size.”

On the sales floor, these plants look great in terrariums or on their own. “It’s still a novelty plant that most gardeners haven’t seen before, and they really want one,” Mark said. “Retailers usually sell out quickly without much extra work to promote them.”



Golden Crocodile Philodendron

Nearly a decade ago, Costa Farms began looking for ways to share the story behind their unique houseplants, so they created a program called the Trending Tropicals Collection. One plant that earned its way into the mix is a philodendron called Golden Crocodile. I spoke with Justin Hancock, Director of Research & Development, Brand Marketing and Horticultural Content, to learn about this stunning selection.

"We knew Philodendron Golden Crocodile was a perfect fit for the collection because it checked several boxes: At the time, it was really hard to find, its golden-yellow color and texture make it incredibly eye-catching and—perhaps most importantly—it will grow well in just about every home," Justin said. "It really is a winner of a plant."

While its exact origin is unknown, Golden Crocodile is likely a sport of Ring of Fire (although some suspect it's a sport of Henderson's Pride/Jungle Boogie. Regardless, retailers can take advantage of this trendy plant by highlighting its ease of care and by mixing it with other dark-leaf plants on the sales floor.

"If you have a group of them, place them at the back of an aisle or the back of the store to draw shoppers over to them," Justin added. "Because blue and yellow are opposite on the color wheel, merchandising cobalt-blue pots or accessories nearby can really add to the visual impact."

Sensitive Plant (*Mimosa pudica*)



Our brains are used to movement on screens, but what about plants that move? Sensitive plants aren't new to the industry, but they're a great plant to introduce people to gardening. I spoke to Andrej Suske, owner of Cascade Tropicals in the Seattle area, to learn how retailers can maximize the uniqueness of this plant.

"It's a puppy love plant because it's the only one we sell that moves when we touch it," Andrej said, adding that kids love this plant. "I often see them displayed near the cash registers. Once [kids] see how it works, mom obviously has to buy one."

For gardeners of all levels, sensitive plant is a cheap and low-risk way to try something new. "We usually sell them in 2- or 4-in. pots," Andrej said. "You can also have a larger display plant that catches their attention and motivates them to grow their own."



Satin Pothos (*Scindapsus pictus* Exotica)

Andrej told me about another plant that has been a longtime favorite among houseplants, the Satin pothos (*Scindapsus pictus* Exotica). "The unique marbling of the leaves is very popular with customers," he said.

Beyond their look, these close relatives of pothos have a special talent. They can "shingle" up a wall by laying their leaves flat against a surface (if you're not familiar with shingling, I recommend searching for this plant on Google). Consumers may not want a plant climbing directly on their walls, but they can use a wooden plank or other structure to let the plant explore the room (it could also be a fun retail display). Scindapsus tends to grow slower than pothos, so they're easy to manage.

In the garden center, plan on selling multiple sizes to get a customer's attention. "Display this plant by selling some

in larger (at least 6-in.) hanging baskets and then complement the display with 4-in. and even 2-in. plants that meet any price point," Andrej added. "The large size will give customers an idea of how beautiful this plant can become."



Purple Passion Plant (*Gynura* spp.)

Some plants beg to be touched, and Purple Passion is one of them. I spoke to Brad Donahue, co-owner of North Carolina Farms Inc., to find out why this plant has been a success.

"The purple leaf color and velvety texture really stand out. And that's why we've been selling gynura since the '70s," he told me.

A native of Southeast Asia, this plant initially has an upright habit, which becomes more spreading as it ages. Gardeners often use them outdoors in areas with filtered light, but it's also a versatile plant for bright indoor areas.

In retail, these plants market themselves, but you can give them a helping hand. "Keep them readily accessible so that your customers can feel how soft they are," Brad said. "Trim off any flowers if they start to bloom because they can smell quite fetid. This will be a new plant to most of your customers, so be ready for questions."

With these unique offerings, customers are receiving more than a plant. They're making memories that put you on top of their mind for future purchases. **GP**

Matthew Olson is a professional horticulturist and garden writer. He regularly writes articles about gardening for consumers and industry professionals. You can reach him at matt@mattolsonhorticulture.com.