

Plant thievery, mini monstera and a houseplant supply webinar



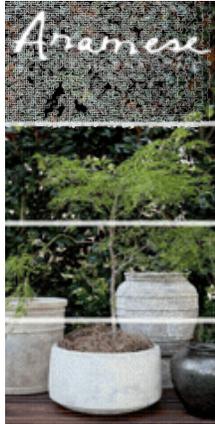
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TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Concerns About Supply
Availability Webinar!
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Concerns About Supply

In response to the National Garden Bureau's "Year of" for houseplants in the last *Tropical Topics e-newsletter*, I received a response from a reader in Texas who basically said he wished they had held off on houseplant promotion. Poor timing was his stated concern.

The reader has been in the wholesale tropical foliage and florist pot crop business for 43 years and says, "I have never seen any plant shortage that approaches what we have now. Coupled with unprecedented demand, it is nightmarish. We have always prided ourselves with obtaining the finest quality plants that have helped make our customers successful. Right now we have been forced to sell crops that shouldn't be sold for months, and it isn't getting any better ... The plant boom is great for all of us, but it would be sad if it died off simply because we couldn't supply the demand in a timely fashion."

Tom Ericson, whom I quoted above about his spring, also shared some houseplant woes. His houseplant broker had mentioned to him around the beginning of March that he placed an order for another customer and was only able to get 25-30% of what was on the list. As Tom says, "The only articles that need to be written about houseplants should be titled, 'Sold Out Until Further Notice.'" I know he said that in a tongue-in-cheek manner, but there is a sad, truthful component to it, for sure.



There's a Webinar About Supply!

If you yourself have thoughts and concerns about the supply of tropicals and houseplants, AmericanHort has recently developed a webinar on this very topic. How timely!

The April 6th "Trends & Availability for Tropical and Foliage Plants" webinar description is this:

"2021 promises to be a challenging year for sourcing tropical and foliage plants. With heightened consumer demand being drawn through both the retail and the interior plantscaping sectors of the green industry, it is important to know where the market is going and how to prepare for the future."



The panel will include growers and brokers of tropical and foliage material who will discuss the struggles of keeping up with demand and what interiorscapers and retailers should be prepared for in terms of sourcing, planning and availability. AmericanHort urges webinar participants to come prepared with your questions on topics like:

- The ins and outs of plant sourcing
- Specific variety and size availability
- Forecasting strategies
- Tactics for communicating shortages to customers
- Consumer trends for foliage in 2021

Panelists will include:

- **Kingston White**, Morning Dew Tropical Plants
- **Denise Godfrey**, Olive Hill Greenhouses Inc.
- **Maxwell Mercer**, Mercer Botanicals
- **Bryan Johnston**, Tri-State Foliage

And it turns out that I will be the webinar's moderator. I am as eager to get the inside scoop on the tropical and houseplant supply issue as you are.

Join me, AmericanHort and the panelists on April 6 at 2 p.m. Eastern for what will surely be an informative discussion. Register for the event [HERE](#). It's free for AmericanHort members and \$49 for non-members. If you're not a member, now's a [good time to join](#).



Plant Thievery Stinks

If supply worries weren't bad enough, I've received multiple reports that thievery of rare and stock houseplants is on the rise. Take the folks at The Plant Parlor in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for instance. They posted this on the shop's Facebook page last week:

"This is so disappointing that we have to post something like this. Unfortunately, while we were open this month, someone stole a Philodendron Mottled Dragon from our shop.

"We know, it might seem odd to post about the theft of ONE plant. It's a rare item, and the price reflects that. Our retail markup is minimal, and as a small business [the theft] is a significant hit. We are filing a police report, including the security footage and screenshots of the theft.

"The most upsetting part is not the monetary loss. Our number one goal with bringing in rare items isn't to make a sale. Most of the time we just like having them in shop. We have a lot of plant lovers that enjoy seeing wish list plants in person. We LOVE being able to offer that, and will absolutely continue to.

"Sadly, we have to beef up security, the rare ones are getting the 'Toiletries at CVS treatment.' We added additional cameras and purchased a plexiglass shield to cover the rare items shelf."



Plant Parlor's more precious plants behind a protective screen.

While those behind the heists may think, "Oh, well, it's just a plant," they likely don't realize that these plants are how people make a living. Especially true for the whole tropical/house plant trade. Nurseries have been hit, too. Stock plants can be worth thousands and can set production back by ... well, a very long time depending on the plant.

What are you doing to protect your rare houseplants or wholesale nursery stock plants? Are you going the "behind locked glass" route? Cameras? Extra layers of security fencing? Drop me a

note about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Mini But Not a Monstera

Tiny plants are all the rage these days. (Maybe that's because availability of bigger plants is quite low?) While *Raphidophora tetrasperma* isn't really a tiny plant, it does carry "mini monstera" as one of its common names. (Other common names include dwarf monstera and monstera Ginny.) Oh, and it's not even a monstera.



R. tetrasperma is on the small side, however, which is appealing to that growing group of customers who think tiny or small plants are cute and adorable and don't want another kitten (I raise my hand). And the fact that this plant is a cute and adorable version of one of the most popular houseplants out there? I imagine the Swiss cheesy looking leaves that get no larger than 6-8 inches across make this plant a popular one.

I heard from my very knowledgeable tropical plant friend David Bache of Garden Industries that there are two types out there: The ones grown from tissue culture and those grown from cuttings. They are distinctly different, David says. The TC plants are softer and those from cuttings do get a bit woody.

While it makes an excellent houseplant, David did put it in a tropical plant combination container, which he created for that upcoming article I'm writing about tropical combos.



Do you have a tropical combo container that you think I should share in the article? If so, I still have a few days before I need to wrap up that piece. Drop me a line with a photo and a list of the combo components at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

Any suggestions, comments, questions or news to share? Just drop me a line at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

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