Plants, Products and Displays from Cultivate'22



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Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

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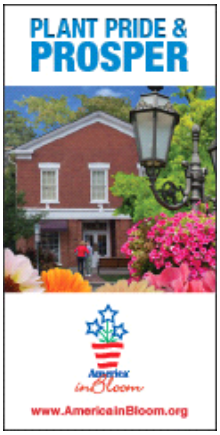
It's All About Cultivate

The U.S.'s biggest horticultural trade show and education program is in the books for 2022. I gotta say, I'm glad I went. I don't have any numbers, but going on what I saw I felt like the ed sessions were well attended—if not numbers-wise then definitely by enthusiasm by attendees for their content. And I love the fact that some of the content is also available on demand.

Mood on the show floor? It seemed upbeat to me, at least for Sunday and Monday. By Tuesday, folks start talking like Daffy Duck. It's a lot for a mind and body to take! Was the enthusiasm for the array of products or was it happiness about seeing folks you hadn't see for a long time? Definitely the latter and likely some of the former because there really was a great gathering of plants, products and services to investigate.









Two Plants I Liked

Okay, let's dig in to some of those plants and products. According to my notes, the first two plants to catch my eye without sales reps or PR folks leading me in were …

Cherry Explosion Hydrangea from Star Roses & Plants. It's the color that drew me in. There was something comforting about it, maybe because it was the color of my favorite Jolly Rancher flavor. It has incredibly large (at least to me) bright cherry-red florets, a bit unique as a lacecap. And it's hardy to Zone 4, too, with a long bloom window. It's also said to perform well in a wide range of conditions.



Second, the new **Skyward Veronica from Darwin Perennials** in both Pink and Blue. I'm a big fan of veronica. It wasn't the color or the stature or anything like that that garnered my attention; it was the promise that these have "continuous blooms throughout the season." My veronica, an unknown variety that I dug up from my mother's garden, blooms for about two weeks and then that's it, with the spent blooms kind of just sitting there saying to me, "Remember what I used to be?"

From a grower's perspective, it's a durable plant that grows and ships without breakage, is naturally compact and is good for 1.5-gal. production. And from a consumer perspective, it's powdery mildew resistant.





Two More

I was guided through other displays by company reps and a bunch of the varieties they touted did catch my attention.

Colocasia Royal Hawaiian Waikiki from Southern Living Plant Collection. It's a truly flamboyant foliage plant with some extraordinary leaf coloration. (Hint: It changes). And it's good in full sun to shade conditions. It's just really cool looking.



Another Southern Living keeper in my book is **Leucothoe Bohemian Beauty.** What's compelling about it to me is the hue change of the new leaves. It transitions from pink to white to green. It's not all the same color, which I think is really intriguing—which is why I like the Birkin Philodendron so much. Hardy to Zone 6a.





And Another Two!

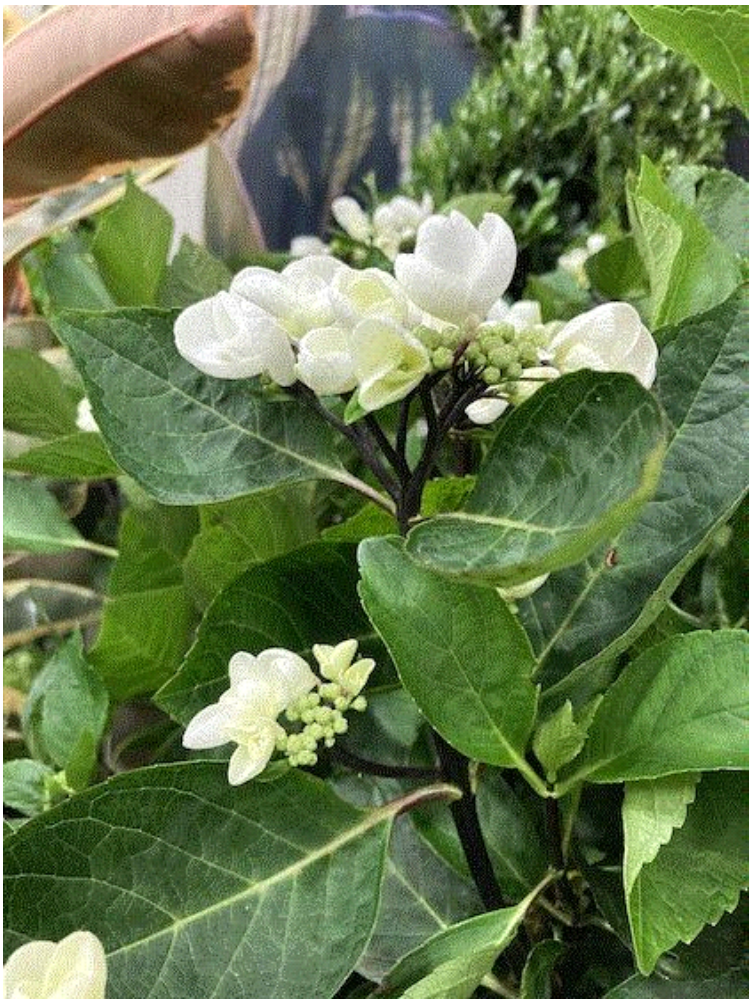
I could keep this “And another two!” going for quite a while, but I'll stop (at least for this week) with these last two items from Monrovia.

Mountain Pepper or *Drimys lanceolata*. They're including this small mild-climate evergreen item in their holiday program. It’s actually a culinary item that has a strong peppery flavor, both in its berry-like fruit and its small, lance-shaped leaves. I tasted a leaf and, boy, does it pack a peppery punch. It's holiday-appropriate for its red-stemmed/green-leaved appearance.



The holiday program, by the way, includes items with that snazzy red pot sleeve that you can't quite see behind the tag. I think it's quite smart-looking, don’t you think?

Another item from Monrovia that I enjoyed is this **Glacier Bay Hydrangea**. Its dark black stems and cup-shaped white just-opening blooms give this item a modern look. It’s a compact rebloomer, hardy to Zone 4 and does make a fun cut flower.



Two Products I Liked

After TPIE I told you about Cassie Pots, a line of retail/consumer pots from the folks at CTI Living. This time around I'll mention two new CTI lines that I saw at Cultivate, both having an eco-friendly aspect to them.

The Natural Desert Colors line uses iron oxides as the colorant. These are natural, mineral-based coloring agents mixed with polypropylene. I was told they cost about 20% to 25% more, but with the proper marketing you could retrieve that at retail. The line has at least four colors thus far.



Another new line from CTI is the **Mixgrain Pots**. These contain fiber husks of rice, wheat and some other grains. Using less virgin plastic is part of their goal to use 100% recycled plastic in their products by 2028. They're at 85% now, which I think is pretty commendable. I couldn't find any info about these two lines on their website, but they might be super new. In the meantime, read about their Flow Pots HERE.



One More

As I write this I'm just back home to find my vegetable garden and my porch pots wilting terribly, despite the layers of mulch I applied before I left and two drenching rains while I was gone. And it was 100F today. Water management—especially when you're on your own well—is a big issue. That's why when I was told about a product that can recapture water from the humidity within the soil, I was intrigued.

Hydretain from the folks at Arborjet/Ecologel helps plants use the moisture vapor in the soil that would otherwise be lost to evaporation. Different from a wetting agent or an absorbent polymer, it attracts moisture vapor from the soil and condenses it back into usable water droplets. I saw the process in action under a microscope—it's cool!



I don’t think Hydretain is new exactly, but what is new is the retail support behind it. It comes in retail-ready granular and liquid formulations with some eye-catching new POP materials.



The handouts posters, stickers, table tents and shelf talkers have can’t-miss visuals that easily communicate the product’s benefits. The product itself seems easy to understand and apply. In fact, I wish I'd had some last week.

Two Displays I Liked

Let’s go back to CTI Living for a sec ... They had the first fun display I saw at Cultivate. Check this out ...





Its span of 50 ft. includes 560 14-in. white planters in a wave formation. I'm not sure how long it took to install, but wow, it seems like a lot of effort, but it does have a dramatic effect.

The second display that made me stop and gawk was the bulb display at Ednie Flower Bulbs, which are sold exclusively through Ball Seed. This was a swiveling of the head instance for me.



Am I right? I tried to get a bulb count from someone, but I take it the folks putting it together thought of that more than halfway through the days-long process and it was too late. I came by a day later and it was clear that some bulbs were actually pushing up the beginnings of leaves. Plant life is pretty cool.

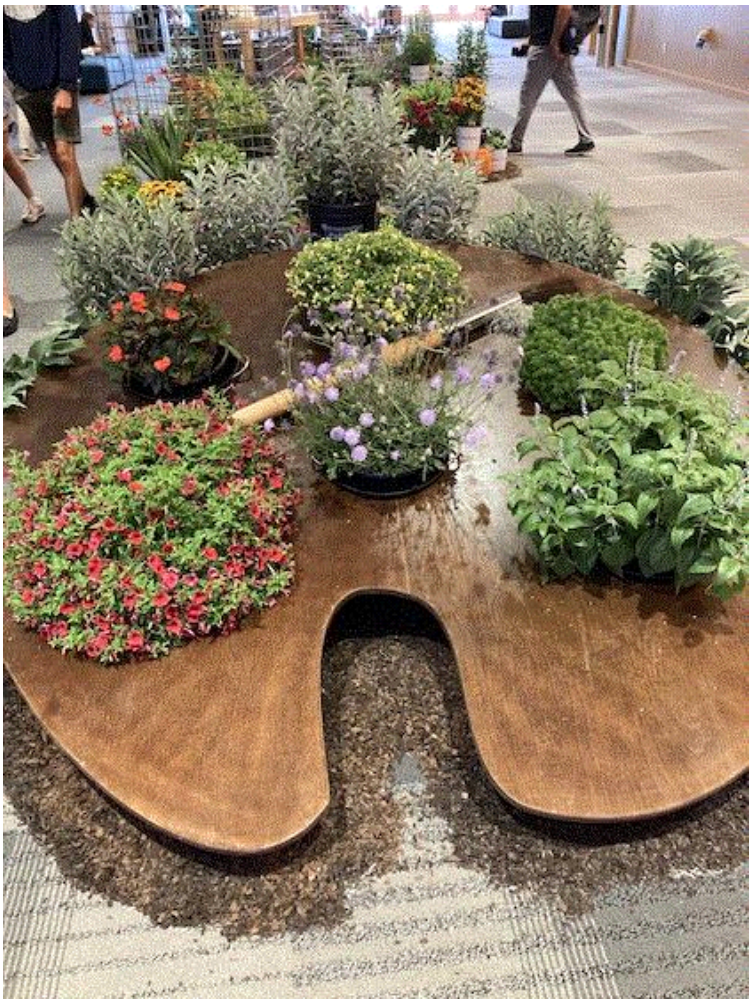


Another Two

Sticking with Ball, this display at the Ball Ingenuity booth caught my eye. It was “on fire.” They combined Floriosa Red Celosia and Cannova Red Golden Flame Canna—both new intros for 2023. I love how they used flame-shaped flowers and leaves to create this.



Here’s another instance of using plants to recreate a common item.



I’m not sure who created this “painter’s palette” (maybe AmericanHort?), but it’s easily duplicated. And inspirational! It carries the hidden message of “use me to paint with plants in your garden.”

And Two More!

The next two are definitely from AmericanHort, as they were located in their lounge area on the show floor.



Here they used old vinyl records to recreate the AmericanHort logo. I’d check the value of the record before gluing it up on a wall.



I'd seen this on the show floor, but didn't really take notice of it until I saw someone using it as a photo opportunity. It could be a permanent structure where you switch out the materials seasonally or have in your houseplant department with foliage surrounding it year round.

Christmas in July!

Proven Winners is helping me keep this whole "Christmas in July" thing going for the third week in a row with their newest idea for using caladiums.

From what I understand, the concept to use caladiums as Christmas décor was something that Proven Winners and partner Classic Caladiums discussed internally a few years ago. Caladiums have all those good greens, whites, pinks and reds associated with Christmas, after all. At some point Moss Greenhouses grew some caladiums for Laura LeBoutillier of Garden Answer to use for the holidays and she made an entire video about it. And now Proven Winners is full steam ahead with the concept.



They even have a tag.



What I like about the concept, besides it being something new for a holiday where we can see so

much “same old, same old,” is that consumers don’t have expectations around pricing. Unlike $1.99 poinsettias, customers don’t have a preconceived idea of what the pricing “should” be.

Finally …

Well, I’m all out of steam for this week. I’ll be back with the 15 winners of the Retailer’s Choice Awards next week and other items listed in my notes that I need to decipher—I have horrible handwriting! Did you see anything exciting? Drop me a note about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

To everyone I saw at Cultivate, even in passing with a wave of the hand, it was *really great* to see you. I don’t know about you, but I’ve been rejuvenated a bit. There are some great things happening in the industry and the transition from one generation to the next was clear as a bell at the show. It’s exciting, to say the least.

Have a great weekend, everyone!

Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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