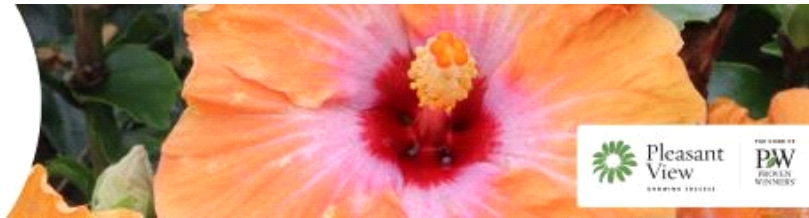


# More from Cultivate'22; plus Aster Gardens, Year of, and pay attention

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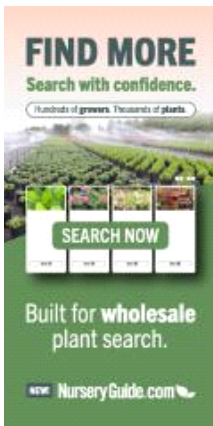
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### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- YRA & YGA Winners
- Winners Keep Coming
- Two From Terra Nova
- A Pair from Plants Nouveau
- Monrovia Houseplant News
- "Year of the" and a Question
- Aster Gardens is Open!
- The Vibe
- More Than Just Monarchs



## YRA & YGA Winners

How on earth did I not mention in last week's Cultivate-focused *Buzz!* the winners of the *Green Profit* and *GrowerTalks* Young Retailer and Young Grower Awards given out at GasWerks during the Unplugged event? I must have been delirious with the summer cold I caught at the event (anyone else?) and I plumb forgot. My apologies to the winners! Oh, and who were they?





Ashleigh Munro, Garden Centre Coordinator at Kiwi Nurseries in Acheson, Alberta, Canada, who took home the Young Retailer Award; and Quinten Henning, Vice President of Henning's Farm & Greenhouses in DeMotte, Indiana, was named Young Grower. For anyone keeping track (and Will Heeman is), Ashleigh makes the fourth Canadian to win our Young Retailer Award.

Quinten and Ashleigh were two of six finalists chosen for this year's award. The other finalists for the Young Retailer Award were Casey McCollum, Plant Perfect Garden Center (Bismark, North Dakota) and Will O'Hara, Van Wilgens Garden Center (North Branford, Connecticut). On the Young Grower side, the other two finalists were Mike Krueger, Midwest Groundcovers (St. Charles, Illinois) and Erika Ramos, J. Berry Nursery (Grand Saline, Texas).



Will, Casey, Ashleigh, Quinten, Mike and Erika. Congrats to all!

Thanks to The Garden Center Group, this is the 17<sup>th</sup> annual awards presentation for the Young Retailer Award. And for the Young Grower Award, this has been going on for 18 years now, thanks to the sponsorship of Ball Horticultural Company. AmericanHort, the folks behind everything Cultivate, were sponsors for both awards, as well.

Are you 35 or younger, a resident of either the U.S. or Canada and a terrific grower or retailer? If so, start working the odds in your favor for the 2023 awards. Nominations are now open! And you are totally allowed to submit your own name and qualifications. Do so [HERE](#) for retailers and [THERE](#) for growers. And you have plenty of time—nominations are due March 1, 2023.



## More Winning!

Those would be for the Retailer's Choice Awards, organized by Danny Summers of The Garden Center Group. Danny wrangles a cadre of retailers to walk the trade show floor to seek out plants and products that strike their eye. They found 15 worthy winners this time around. As I usually do with these awards, I'll separate them into plant and product groups between this week and next. First up, the plants.

**Aroid Greenhouses** is no stranger to the TPIE Cool New Product Awards (also organized by Danny), and can now say they have a Retailer's Choice Award, too. It was given to Aroid for its ***Monstera obliqua***, a unique form of Monstera that has been described as "more holes than leaf." It's an extremely rare plant, probably because it takes 12-14 months for one of these fenestrated leaves to fully form. [www.aroidgreenhouses.com](http://www.aroidgreenhouses.com).



**Bailey Nurseries' Pop Star Hydrangea** was a can't-miss item at Cultivate, as marketing for

the latest addition to the Endless Summer brand was everywhere. With good reason—it's gorgeous! Pop Star is reportedly one of the earliest lacecaps to bloom and it does so with abundance. It's compact, easy to grow and is well-suited for containers and garden beds. [www.baileynurseries.com](http://www.baileynurseries.com).



**Centeron Nursery** in New Jersey took home a Retailer's Choice Award for its line of plants that support pollinators in their caterpillar form. The **Caterpillar Candy Series** includes creative messaging around a selection of plants that are like, well, candy that the fuzzy crawlers love to munch. The series includes a selection of asclepias in colorful 4-in. pots with eye-catching graphics. Plant a row for the hungry caterpillars! [www.centeronnursery.com](http://www.centeronnursery.com).



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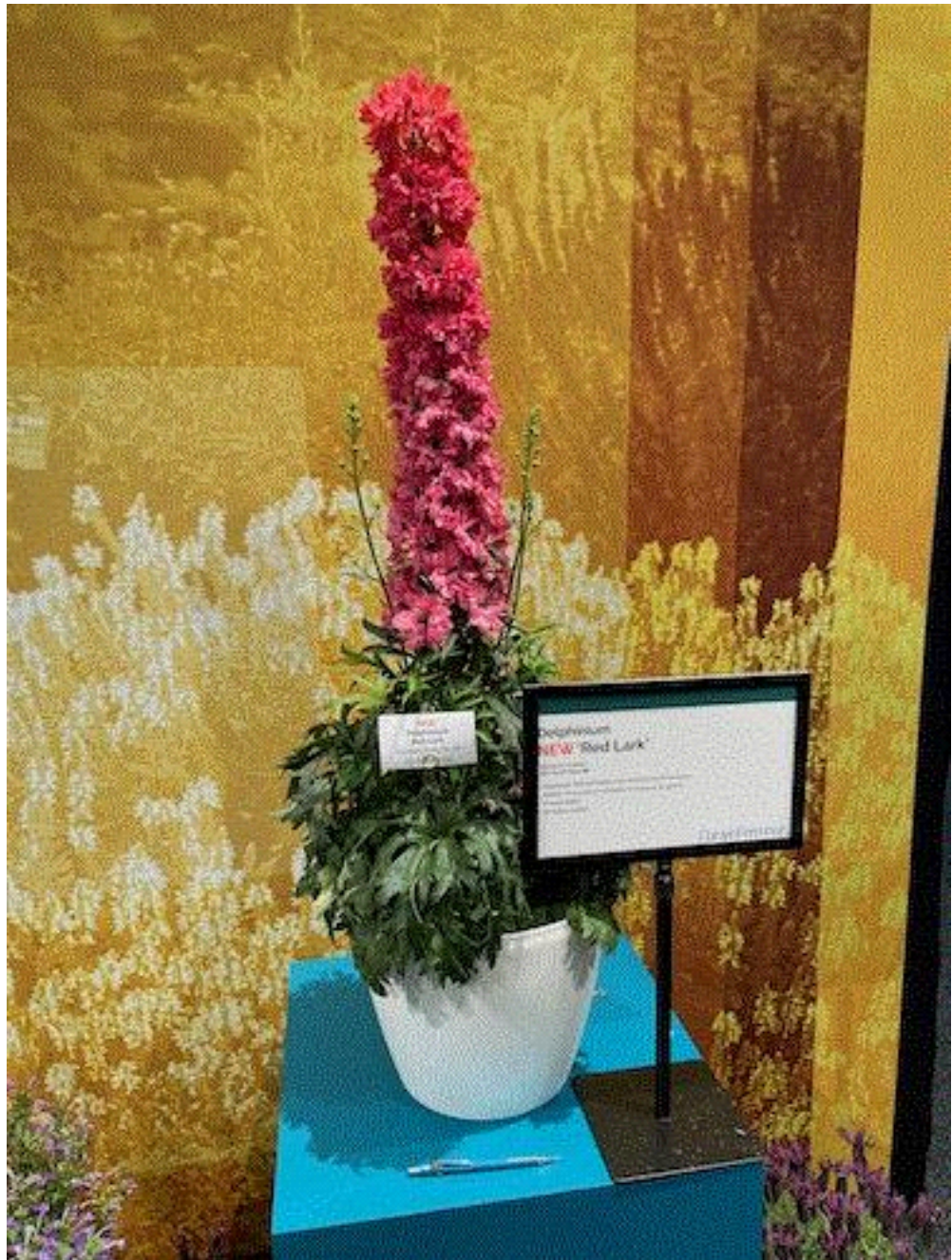
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## The Second Three

**Darwin Perennials** debuted a delphinium, **Red Lark**, that caught the attention of the roving retailer judges with its sturdy upright habit. Unshakable! The color is great, too. And, another bonus—it is sterile so will not reseed. [www.darwinperennials.com](http://www.darwinperennials.com).

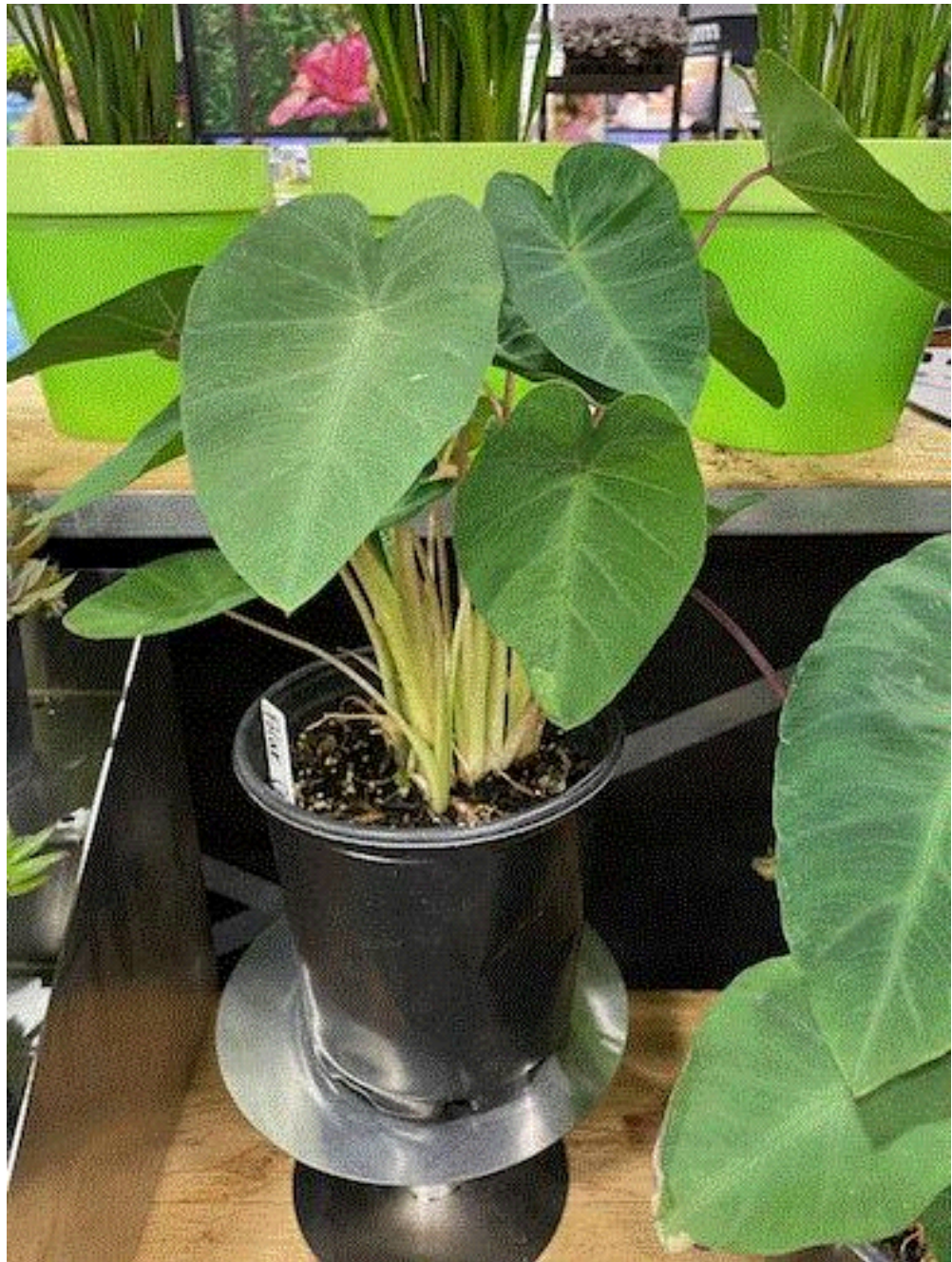


**Dümmen Orange** may have just gotten into the houseplant game but they are already winning awards for items they carry in their Welcome to the Jungle houseplant program. **Delosperma Gherkin**, a.k.a. pickle plant received the award for this touchable, fuzzy foliage that resembles pickles. Mounding and trailing, it's a great item for a basket. Bonus: It has small yellow flowers

on occasion. [www.dummenorange.com](http://www.dummenorange.com).



**Gardenworld-Growing Colors/2 Plant** received an award for the first-ever hardy (to Zone 5!) colocasia. It's called **Polargreen** and features green leaves with pink stems. It tops off at 3- to 5-ft. tall. Interestingly, it does not produce much of a bulb, which is why they are producing it in tissue culture. [www.gardenworldinc.com](http://www.gardenworldinc.com).



### Rounding Out the Last Third

Another non-stranger to the Cool New Products Awards, **Northland Floral's** time at Cultivate'22 netted them a Retailer's Choice Award for the **Hawaiian Palm (*Brighamia insignis*)**. This species can only be found in the wilds of Hawaii's Kauai Island. It's become nearly extinct thanks to difficulties of natural cultivation, but it's been successfully produced through seed and tissue culture propagation. Interestingly, its leaves fall off once a year, leaving some scarring on the trunk that is much like an external growth ring. These are fairly easy to take care of, and will

product yellow star-shaped flower that last up to several weeks. [www.northlandfloral.com](http://www.northlandfloral.com).



Sedums are finding the spotlight lately. Selecta One's Sedum Little Shimmer found a bit of that spotlight with a Retailer's Choice Award. It's an annual sedum with small, heart-shaped leaves of light and dark green. It also has small, delicate flowers. Mounding to 2-3 in. tall and spreads up to 7 in. Use it as a groundcover in low-water areas in baskets. Oh, she's got an all-green sister, Little Shine. [www.selectanorthamerica.com](http://www.selectanorthamerica.com).



The final plant in this year's Retailer's Choice mix is Calibrachoa Million Bells Orangina from Suntory Flowers. If you guessed that it has the same coloration as the popular orange drink, you're right. Brilliant co-branding here with a well-known beverage brand, thanks to Suntory Holdings being part owner of Pepsi Bottling Ventures, the producers of Orangina. They say that Orangina POP could be coming. Could a whisky-colored Hibiki variety be next?  
[www.suntoryflowers.com](http://www.suntoryflowers.com).



To see ALL the Retailer's Choice Award winners, watch [THIS](#) fabulous 4K video featuring Bossman Beytes and shot by new videographer extraordinaire Osvaldo Cuevas.

## Two From Terra Nova

I did my own walkabout on the show floor looking for new plants that caught my discerning editorial eye. And I found some! More than some, actually. I'll share just a few of them here.

Chuck Pavlich at [Terra Nova Nurseries](#) may be the happiest person to attend a trade show. It's because he loves what he does (plant hunting and breeding) and sharing them with others. He shared with me five of his favorites, and I have room for two at the moment. First, Lion Cub Rudbeckia. Although it has genetics from a *fulgida*, it's being sold as an annual for most regions (Zones 9-11). It's naturally short and compact without pinching nor PGRs. I like how it looks like the scruff of its namesake.



Second, Cara Mia Sands Echinacea. It's white with green hues at the center, with super branching—three to seven flower stems per branch! And those branches do not flop, either. Has a great scent, too, and pollinators love it, Chuck says.



I'll be back with the other three Chuck showed me when I'm needing to fill space in *Buzz*!

### **A Pair from Plants Nouveau**

I stopped in the [Plants Nouveau](#) booth to see what my sort-of neighbor Angela Treadwell-Palmer has been up to. At least two plants and some news, is what.

Check out this begonia:



Sterling Moon is the first in the Lunar Lights series of very large-leaved begonias that produce delicate sprays of flowers beginning in spring. Sterling Moon has puckered, forest-green leaves with silver flecking. Its pink flowers pair well with the younger leaves, as they are tinged pink, as well. Hardy to Zone 7, and Angela says these begonias are actually really easy to bring inside for cooler months. A patio plant then!

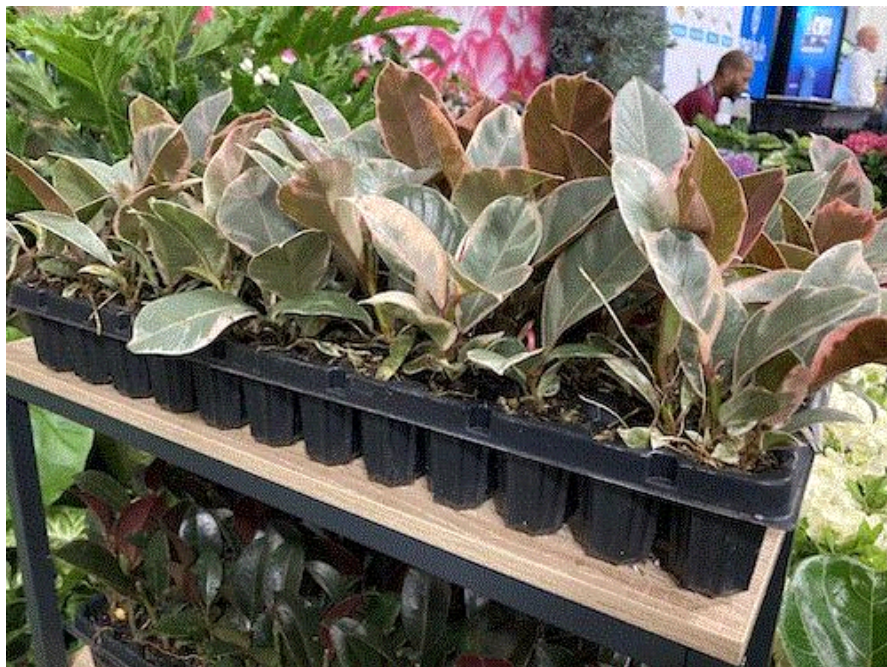


Next is the hybrid Summertime Blues Vitex. I'm new to vitex and I do like them. This one has exceptionally large flowers held on black stems, plus a nicely rounded habit, making it nearly shrublike. "But vitex are invasive!" you say. Nope, this one has not produced viable seeds ever.

The news Angela had for me is that Plants Nouveau will be managing the plant introductions for the Chicago Botanic Garden's Chicagoland Grows Plant Collection; i.e. they'll be doing the license administration, intellectual property management and getting growers and consumers alike excited about the varieties. A job right up their alley. Chicagoland is full of super-enthusiastic gardeners just champing at the bit for new introductions. Have fun with it!

## Monrovia Houseplant News

It's not new additions or deletions from their fairly new houseplant program that I bring you news of today. It's simply that they are now offering liners to their IGC customers.



Why liners in addition to their larger-sized houseplants? Well, it's because some of Monrovia's customers have been wanting to grow on their own houseplants, for various reasons. Maybe they are growing combos or bowls. Maybe they want to grow in special pots. Some, I'm told, specifically wanted these liners for workshops and planting parties. If you're an IGC and are interested in procuring some liners, talk with your Monrovia rep about availability.

## “Year of the” and a Question

Another bit of news out of Cultivate is the announcement of the 2023 “Year of the” plants from the folks at [National Garden Bureau](#). The “Year of the” program has six different categories; I revealed the houseplant choice earlier this week in Tropical Topics (orchid!), and I'll now reveal the other five categories:

- Bulbs: Year of the Amaryllis
- Annuals: Year of the Celosia
- Edibles: Year of the Broccoli
- Perennials: Year of the Rudbeckia
- Flowering Shrubs: Year of the Spirea



The aim of the “Year of the” program is to choose and highlight crops that are easy to grow, are genetically diverse, and have a ton of new breeding that can be showcased. NGB goes to great lengths to promote all of the “Year of the” crops to the consumer media and as well as to consumers directly, such as via NGB webinars, so demand for these crops does increase!

Promotion to consumer media begins in January, and as such NGB suggests breeders, brokers, growers and garden centers start incorporating the “Year of the” plants into your marketing for 2023. As of November 1, you’ll be able to download photos, fact sheets, flyers, signage, posters, presentation, and all the marketing support around the “Year of the” crops from the [NGB website](#).

Oh, and that question I referred to above comes from NGB Executive Director Diane Blazek, whom I spoke with at the show. She was wondering how garden centers and growers decide which new varieties they grow and/or carry? Where do you look for new varieties? And how do you learn about them? (Other than from *Buzz* and *Acres Online*, of course.) Help Diane out by dropping her a note about your sources of new variety info at [DBlazek@ngb.org](mailto:DBlazek@ngb.org).

Did you know that NGB has a very comprehensive list of and information about all the breeders' new intros? It's true. Find it [HERE](#).

## Aster Gardens is Open for Business!

*Colleague Jen Zurko last week gleefully attended the opening of a brand new plant shop in Chicagoland owned and operated by none other than Green Profit columnist (and wearer of many other hats) Amanda Thomsen. Here's Jen's report:*

Green Profit columnist, garden blogger, speaker and all-around awesome person Amanda Thomsen took the plunge and opened her very own storefront plant shop last week.

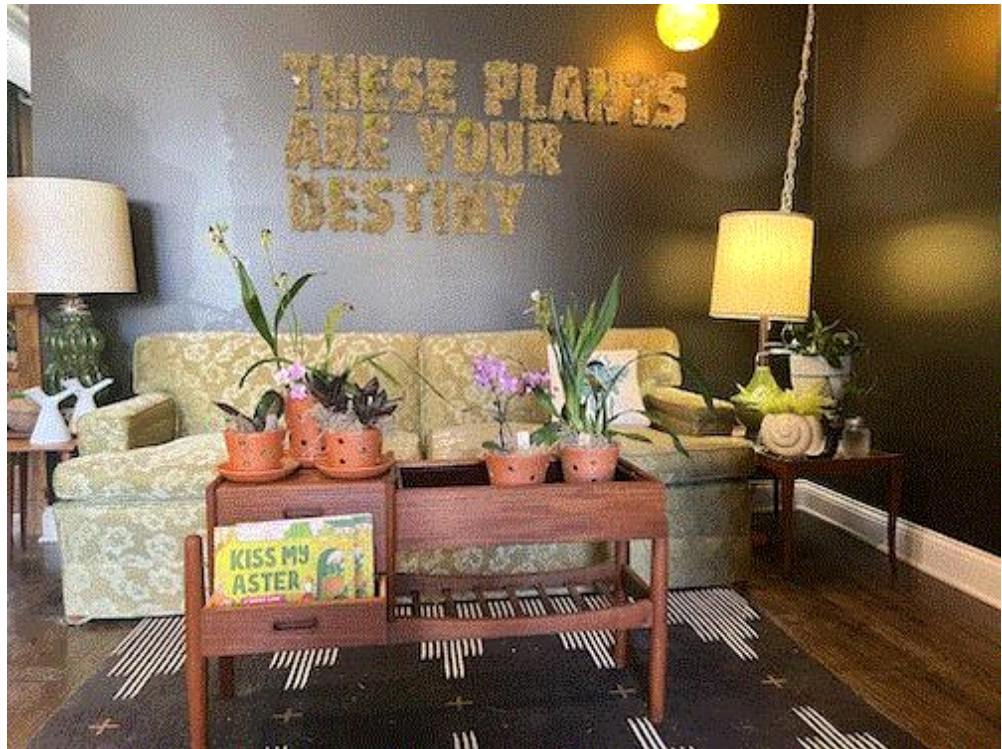
Called Aster Gardens (taken from her blog's name, Kiss My Aster), it's located in the center of the Chicago suburb of Lemont, Illinois. And since it was a short drive away, I wanted to stop by Amanda's grand opening and ribbon cutting to show our support and to check out her new place.



Middle: Amanda Thomsen officially opens Aster Gardens by cutting the ribbon with the help of her daughter, Hazel, husband, Dan, and members of Lemont's chamber of commerce.

If you know Amanda or read her columns on a regular basis, then you'll understand when I say Aster Gardens is very Amanda. The words "These Plants Are Your Destiny" on the front window and an interior wall welcomed me as I walked in, while Blondie's "Heart of Glass" set the mood in the background.





Amanda Thomsen's new plant shop Aster Gardens proclaims to its visitors, "These Plants Are Your Destiny."

Aster Gardens has a good mix of houseplants, gifts and accessories, apparel and overall just cool stuff, which is Amanda's intended goal. She wants her offerings to be non-pretentious and easily accessible.

"Stuff for tattooed moms," she said.

## The Vibe at Aster Gardens

Amanda's focus is also on being more eco-friendly, with reused and recycled materials.

"I'm trying to do things the way I want it," she explained. And all of the plant material is sourced from growers in the Chicagoland area and nearby Michigan.



Aster Gardens sources all of their plants locally and offer eco-friendly pots and containers.

There's a small kitchen area in the back where she'll hold workshops and events. Amanda doesn't want to be a full-fledged florist, but she started her first foray into producing wedding favors and will see where that goes. And next to the store is a grassy area that Amanda eventually wants to expand into an outdoor seating/event area where she'll sell shrubs, and even Christmas trees during the holidays.

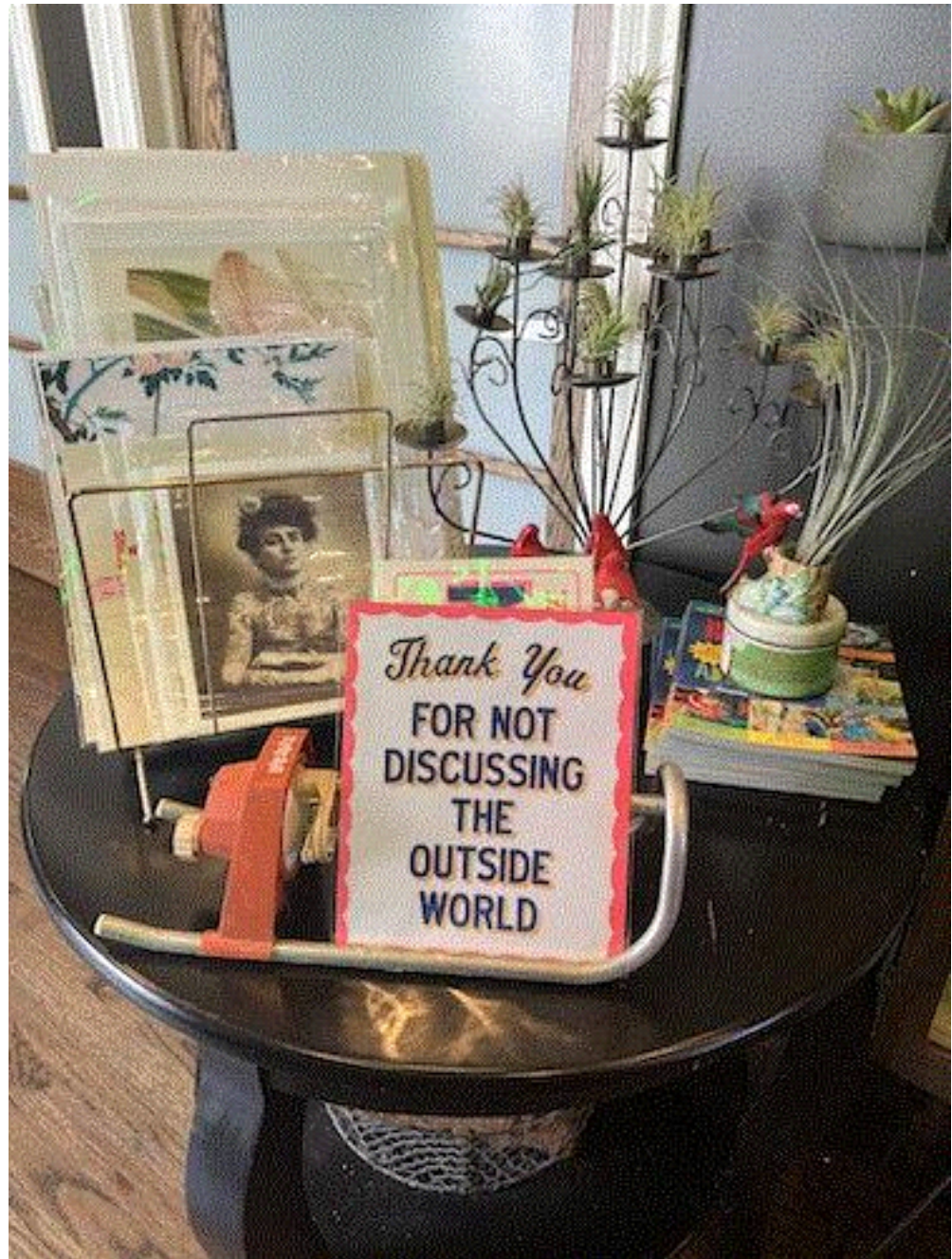
Opening her own plant shop "was always a dream, but I never thought it was possible," she said. For the last 10 years, she's been "drowning in motherhood," so it wasn't top of mind until recently, now that her daughter Hazel is going into middle school.

Ultimately, Amanda just wants Aster Gardens to be a cool place for people to visit. She wants them to buy stuff, of course, but to also re-visit for multiple reasons.

"Even though I've always been a purist, I realize that I'm making a space for people to have events, take great photos and make great memories," she said.



Aster Gardens' first-ever sale!



VERY Kiss My Aster.

*Thanks for the report, JZ! Can't wait to visit myself. Maybe at Christmas time? Also, check out their [Instagram](#). Why do I feel like I'd see Ralphie and Randy Parker choosing trees there?*

## More Than Just Monarchs

You may have heard that the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus plexippus*) has been added to the [International Union for Conservation of Nature's](#) list of threatened species. This iconic migratory creature could become extinct relatively soon if the climate continues to warm, native plants continue to become sparse, chemicals in the environment continue to threaten their health and habitat opportunities continue to decline.

That's why programs such as the Caterpillar Candy program previously mentioned are important to not only introduce to the industry but also to be *used* by the industry. That's why the echinacea Cara Mia Sands I mentioned earlier, alongwith all the other pollinator-friendly plants out there are important to introduce to the industry and to be *promoted and sold* by the industry. Plants and flowers are pretty, sure, I totally agree. But we're at a point where what we breed and sell has to be pretty *and* serve a greater purpose—food, shelter, water conservation, air purification, soil remediation and so on.

So, when I mention the pollinator-friendly programs or the water-wise plants, take more than a moment to look into them. Because your next generation of gardeners are looking for that “and ...”

Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).



Ellen Wells  
Senior Editor  
Green Profit

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