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TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023

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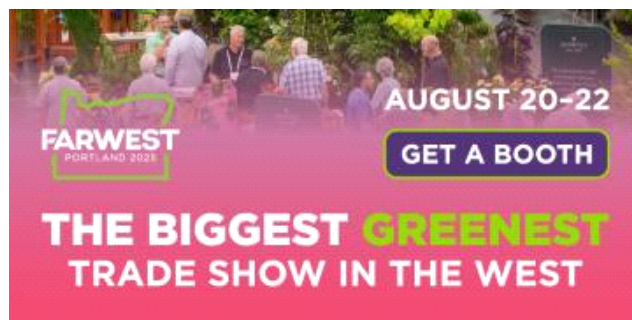


Nursery & LANDSCAPE INSIDER

News and Commentary for the landscape and nursery market

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

The Prologue
Power Planter
Mangave Newbies
Poison Ivy & Oak Soap
Brindabella Crimson Knight
Snow Mate
Delphinium Red Lark
Notes From the Edge of Sanity



The Prologue

Last week, MANTS kicked off the 2023 trade show season with a bang. With no snowstorm to deal with (as we had in 2022) and less emphasis on COVID, MANTS seemed to have that pre-COVID excitement fully back. Most people (vendors and attendees) were in a good mood with positive expectations for 2023. Isles were full of attendees and a good number of new products were on display.

Over the next couple of newsletters, I'll cover some of the more interesting products from MANTS with a little commentary thrown in based upon conversations with industry leaders.

Power Planter

As a third-generation company in business for about 25 years, this company nor its product(s) can be classified as new. But **Power Planter** has finally hit its stride due to a couple of factors.

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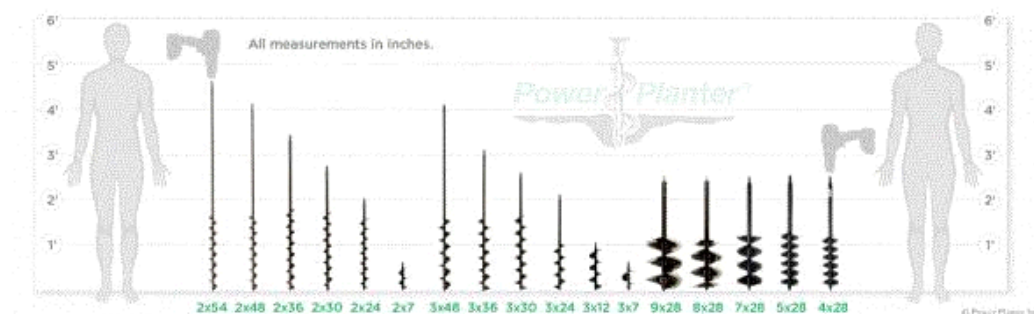
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First (and most importantly) because of labor issues that currently plague the landscape industry. This product offers a quicker means of digging planting holes (or post holes). And from a worker standpoint, it's also an easier means of digging holes, meaning less worker dissatisfaction and potentially less worker compensation claims.

That ease of use is also translating into greater interest from consumers. In fact, a number of big box stores now carry Power Planter. Additionally, a commercial partnership with DeWalt power tools (initiated in Australia and now available in North America) has built interest further. Product sizes range from a bulb planter up to a 3-gallon container diameter, all of which can be used with an 18-volt (or greater) drill that accepts a 3/8-in. or 1/2-in. bit.



This figure gives you an idea of the range of product sizes to choose from. Photo courtesy of Power Planter.

Power Planter comes in a “garden ager” line (for homeowners) and a “heavy-duty” line (commercial) for contractors. The heavy-duty line offers the ability to sharpen or replace critical components that wear with time, which avoids the need to invest in completely replacing the units. Overall, this is a product that should have caught on many years ago, but that's hitting its stride today, and rightfully so.

THE BIGGEST GREENEST TRADE SHOW IN THE WEST

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Mangave Newbies

Walters Gardens continues the parade of super-cool Mangave (hybrids between the genus Manfreda and Agave) cultivars in 2023 with two newbies.

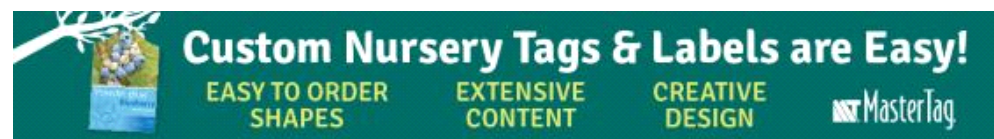


The first, Permanent Wave, has a bit of an *Agave parryi* look to it (see below). Somewhat short and stout, it reaches a height of 20 in. with a 3-ft. spread. I really like the look of this one, as it's got some substance in the landscape and would contrast well with many perennial border plants having chartreuse foliage and/or white-to-pastel flower colors.



On the left is Mangave Permanent Wave and on the right is Mangave Wiggling Out, which represent the two newest cultivars from Walters Gardens.

The other new Mangave cultivar is Wiggling Out (above right), which closely resembles the previously released cultivar Bad Hair Day with the exception that it's variegated. With 10-in. height and 20-in. width, it makes a great border plant or container plant. Very versatile in the landscape. I expect this cultivar to take off in the coming years.



Marie Originals Poison Ivy & Oak Soap

Marie Originals, a company based out of Pearl River, New York, has for several years been picking up steam in the area of natural therapeutics/bioactives. This company gets my award for best giveaway (a bar of their **Poison Ivy & Oak Soap**) and they were also very personable (more on this in the Notes from the Edge of Sanity below).



Photo courtesy of Marie Originals.

The **Poison Ivy & Oak Soap** contains all plant-based ingredients with the exception of a clay that helps dry up the blisters. Based upon reviews online, this product seems to work extremely well at both preventing symptoms when exposed to poison ivy and oak, as well as treating symptoms after they've flared up. I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to try this out personally this year and will certainly send out an update at that time.



Brindabella Crimson Knight

If you've been reading this newsletter for some time, you're aware that I'm a huge fan of Brindabella Roses from Suntory. Reblooming is one thing, and that's nifty, but reblooming and offering fragrance is even better, and I'm not sure anyone can argue that point. This is precisely why I'm so high on Brindabella Roses, as you get reblooming and fragrance with these cultivars in a rose that resembles classic hybrid tea roses.



While not new, Crimson Knight (like many new cultivars during that period) didn't get the full suite of marketing during the pandemic by hitting the trade show circuit in force. No worries, as it's being shown off now and it's quite the looker. At a height of 4 ft. with a width of 3- to 4-ft. spread, I find it to be well contained and an upright habit keeps it tidy in the landscape.

In production, like most roses, spider mites and downy mildew can both be issues that require management. But in the landscape, neither are terribly disruptive to its performance. Hardy across Zones 5 to 9, it does best in full sun with summer blooming aided by mulching well and irrigating as needed.


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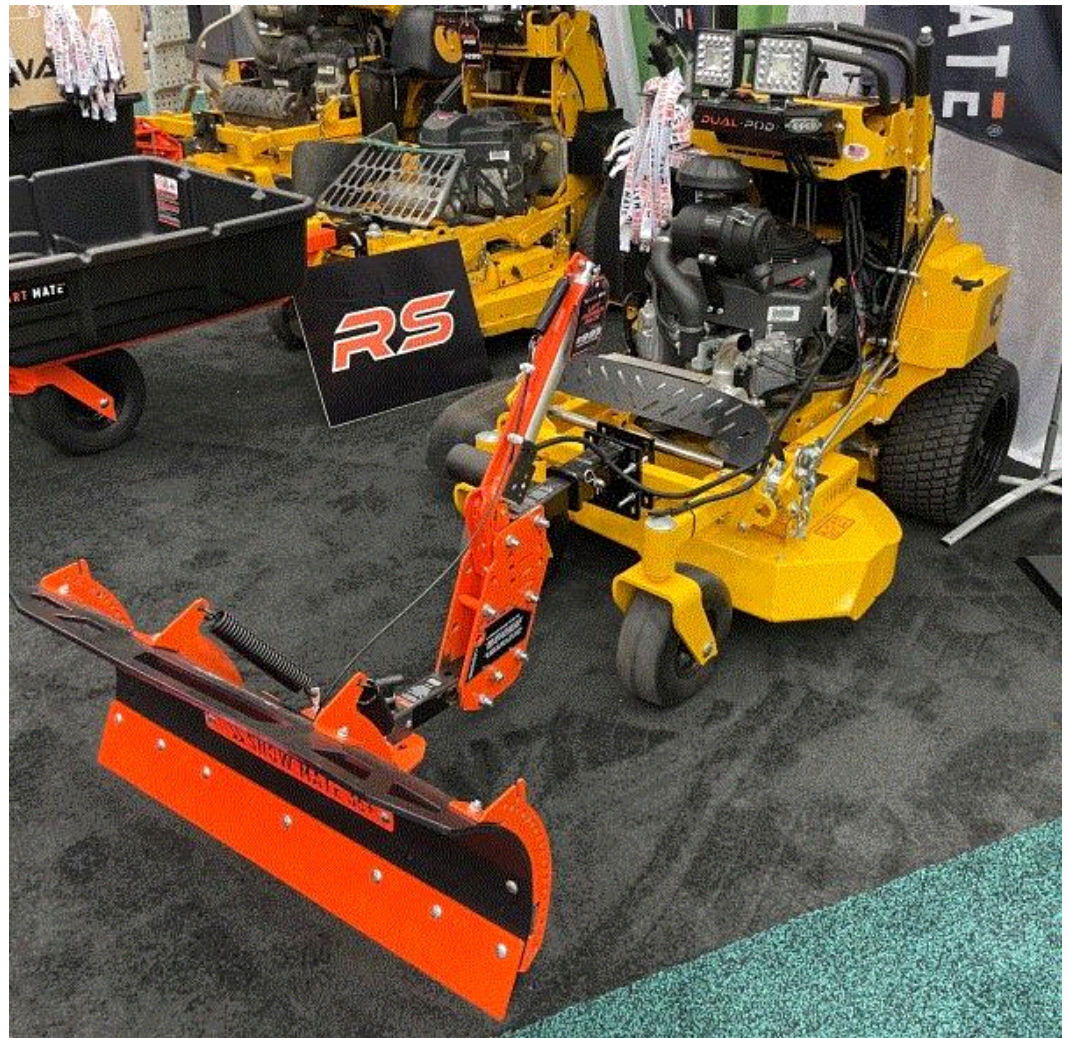
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Snow Mate

Mulch Mate has a history of designing equipment that's easy to operate, tough and capable of operating across multiple platforms. Such is the case with the newish product from Mulch Mate, the **Snow Mate plow** (which hit the market in late 2021).

The Snow Mate can attach to nearly any zero turn mower using a bracketing system. New for this year is a power up/down/left/right actuator that assists greatly when moving from one area to another.



Pictured in the foreground is the Snow Mate Attachment, as well as the LED lightbar attachment on the same zero-turn.

The setup also includes a ton of options, including winglets that stretch the width of the blade from 36 in. to a max of 52 in. and a two-wire blinding LED lighting system (with two or three LED array options) that supposedly lights up to three-fourths of an acre. With replaceable blade edges, spring trip-overs and lots of other features, this is a cost-effective means of ramping up snow removal efforts. Just make sure that zero turn has snow chains on before you fire this bugger up.



Delphinium Red Lark

New from Darwin Perennials is a delphinium that doesn't flop. In my opinion, I could stop there because as much as I love delphiniums, I stopped bothering with them two decades ago because I don't have

time for that. It's about time someone cracked the flippy-floppy code!

Flower color is a bit unusual compared to the delphinium cultivars of old in Red Lark (a coral that favors red), but that's to be expected since it's an interspecific hybrid. As with many interspecific hybrids, it's also sterile, so no seeding out to deal with. Oh, it's also a reliable perennial in Zones 5a to 8b with a two- to three-month bloom period from mid-spring into early summer, both quite impressive.

It's a bit shorter than what we're used to at 28 to 30 in. in height (16- to 18-in. spread), but stems are much more robust, meaning it makes a great cut flower. As with most delphiniums, full sun to part shade (afternoon shade) is best with moist, yet well-drained, soil. A heavy mulch layer also helps keep soil cool and improve plant health, particularly in Zone 8.



Overall, this has the potential to change how many of us view delphiniums and I'm eager to see if we get more flower colors in the future.

NEW FOR 2026



Our Wacky Wonderful World—Notes from the Edge of Sanity

Every year, I attend multiple trade shows. It's a wonderful chance to communicate with my peers and

friends about what's new, meet new people, and most importantly, find out all the gossip. I make it a point to walk by every booth and say hello, even if it's just in passing, and this often leads to a conversation about some aspect of a business and/or product. But there are many vendors that are simply tuned out, which I find puzzling and unfortunate.

At MANTS 2023, I decided to group these behaviors into "The Categories of Non-Engagement":

- The Phone Zombies. The person or persons in the booth are all intently looking at their phones. (I know they don't look up because I make faces at them as I walk by.)
- The Inter-Office Conversations. When two to five individuals working a booth are engaged in meaningless conversation among one another. I like to find out what's so important so I generally will walk into the booth and lurk. It's typically sports or entertainment related, although occasionally there's a good political rant to be heard.
- The Escaped Employee(s). All employees from a booth have escaped and are with friends at a booth half way down the same isle ... or completely gone!
- The Locked-in Syndrome. This is the scariest of all non-engagement categories. These vendors will sit in the very back of a booth, look right at you, hear you say hello and fail to acknowledge that you're another human.

Now why did I go on this tirade?

It's pretty simple. Being at a trade show and exhibiting is all about interactions. Find those employees in your company that are engaging, extroverts (not that there's anything wrong with introverts), and passionate about their jobs and businesses, regardless of their day-to-day role(s). Send these individuals to exemplify your business. They'll represent your business and your products with passion and build relationships that last.

If you're ever curious as to what a well-oiled machine is when it comes to interacting at a trade show, I suggest you observe the booths of Van Belle Nursery (Bloomin' Easy), Spring Meadow Nursery, Ball Seed/Star Roses & Plants, Raemelton Farm and Carolina Nurseries (just to name a few).

Live authentic,



Matthew Chappell
Editor-at-Large
Nursery & Landscape Insider

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