More RCA Winners, plus my own picks and the 2024 PPOY



Summer Merchandising Made Easy: Instant-Impact Containers Your Customers Will Love



WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023







COMING UP THIS WEEK:

The Rest of the Winners A Tropical and Some Fruit A Tray and New Bundles 3D Printing and Soil Testing A Few More of My Own Two More Some Veggies JP's Finds at Cultivate Get Creative Looking for Perennials?



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Rudbeckia 'Treasure Trove' New to Proven Winners Perennials for 2025-2026!





The Rest of the Winners

Is it really possible to include every single item that catches the eye at a large event like Cultivate? No. But with the help of those volunteer Retailers' Choice Award retailers-turned-judges, it makes reporting on the *good* goods, the ones that'll get a chance on retail shelves and benches, that much easier.

This week we're finishing up the reporting on the remaining eight items that received those





The difference speaks for itself.



Untreated Treated with











awards, and then I'll tell you about a few I spotted on my own.

The following houseplants are ones I mentioned in this week's *Tropical Topics* newsletter. I included them here with a few additional retail details.

Gen Z 2-In. Tropicals from Biostok Tropicals. I liked this one a lot because I loved the concept behind it: sell small houseplants that Gen Z plant parents can nurture and grow into adulthood—and they are a lot cheaper and better house-trained than a puppy. This program has three different packages you can choose from: the BELEAF includes the easy-to-care-for basics; the BECOOL includes plants that are a step up for plant parents wanting to add some unique items; and BEBOLD includes harder-to-find exotic varieties for experienced plant parents.



A sampling of the BEBOLD 2-in. plants.

Biostok Tropicals offers about 120-150 varieties in all. You can find out which plants are in the three Gen Z Tropicals categories and other information HERE.

Schefflera Cayman from ForemostCo. The judges were blown away by its deeply serrated leaves.







Apparently they were calling it the Edward Scissorhands plant because it looked so much like that character's appendages. This got the folks at ForemostCo thinking that perhaps Cayman might not be the catchiest name for something as unique as this. So they're holding a competition for renaming it! You have until July 31 to submit your suggested name HERE, and if your name is chosen for the plant, they will ship you your very own specimen. And lucky you, if you get one. I was speaking with ForemostCo about this plant and they said they still have some production questions to answer and such, and availability is a year or more out. Learn more about ForemostCo HERE.



Sunshine[®] Black Bear[®] Indoor & Outdoor Potting Mix



A Tropical and Some Fruit

Sticking with the tropicals theme, we have **Colocasia Redemption from Green Trade Horticulture/Plants Nouveau.** Do the rippled, shiny leaves remind you of another recently introduced colocasia? They should! Redemption is a cousin of the dark and alluringly delicious Pharoah's Mask, another head-turning tropical. But whereas Pharoah's Mask has lime greenhighlighted leaves, Redemption's mature leaves develop a neon-pink blotch that grows larger, radiating outward as a bright pink starburst in the leaf's center. Could it be even more of a stunner than its lime green cousin? I vote yes!



Use this colocasia's 3-4 ft. height as a highlight in garden beds and near water features. Read more about it HERE.

Edible Fruit Collection from Dewar Nurseries. The roving retailers were really impressed with Dewar's collection of Edible Fruit Plants in highly decorative pots. Why? Just look at them! They have both the image of the fruit and a very helpful tag full of information. The assortment contains banana, blackberry, blueberry, fig, grape, guava, kiwi, mulberry, papaya, passion fruit, pineapple, raspberry, and even tea (*Camellia sinensis*). The judges felt that the combination of the pot and tags will simply sell themselves. Read more about them HERE.





A Tray and New Bundles

Low-Profile Tray from The HC Companies. This next one is a combination of the sentiments, "Finally, someone is solving this problem!" and "Gee, why didn't I think of that?" Bossman Chris Beytes got the scoop on the Low-Profile Tray like only Chris could, and so I will include some of his *Acres Online* write-up on the product below:

I can't recall the last time someone innovated the lowly shuttle tray. But HC asked growers what they wanted in a tray and growers replied, "Less soil loss, less labor to assemble and less space taken up in the production barn."



The solution was found in a six-pack carrier, which is basically what the Low-Profile Tray looks like. But rather than flexible plastic, this is hard plastic with clips that hold pots in place, plus slots for tags. Fifty of these, with pots, takes up the same space as eight regular shuttle trays with pots.



Chris notes that they are strong, too. If you're a grower-retailer, you'll want to test them out yourself. Imagine what you could do with all that space you save in your production area! You can read more about the tray HERE.

Plant Care Kits from We The Wild. I wrote about these folks last year because they won a '22 Retailers' Choice Award for their unique 100% organic, made-by-earthworms houseplant care products. This year they win for their bundling.



The three assortments are Revive + Thrive Duo for houseplant vitality; Leaf Care Duo for lush, healthy and shiny leaves; and Houseplant Essentials for general, all-around plant care. I also saw they have an Orchid Care Essential Kit, too. Find out more HERE.



3D Printing and Simple Soil Testing

3D-printed decorative containers from IC3D. Out of the hundreds of booths at Cultivate, what are the chances that two adjacent booths both win a Retailers' Choice Award? We The Wild's booth neighbor, IC3D, was a winner, too, for their 3D-printed decorative and drainage-holed pots. Based in Columbus, IC3D does custom production of 3D products for a few small organizations you may have heard of before: Ford, NASA, the Navy, folks like that.



They can create any size, style, structure and form pot that you can think of, and that's largely in part because they can create their own ground and recycled PETG. Your imagination is the only limit! If you are wanting something special, contact them and I'm sure they can provide. Find out more about them HERE.

MySoil Test Kits from Predictive Nutrient Solutions. The MySoil Test Kit is not only a soil test kit that identifies a gardener's soil nutrient condition, it also helps redirect the customer back to your own garden center and provides the soil adjustments with the products that your store carries. You can add your company logo, select a report template and add your fertilizer and soil amendment product lines so the customer comes back to your store to purchase what they need. And the cool thing about the kit is it's set up to resemble a "23 and Me" style DNA testing kit (something that a good number of consumers are already familiar with), making an activity that could be intimidating seem a bit more approachable. Find more info HERE.



EDITIONS MORE BLOOMS

A Few More of My Own

My top products and the judges' top products for Cultivate intersected on a few items, but those weren't all I noticed as I walked the floor looking for recommendations for you.

Take the new introduction from Plants Nouveau, **Fruit Snacks**, for example. It's a line of upright, dwarf and skinny apple trees that make growing apples easy and hassle-free in a small space. Plant them as a hedge or even grow them in large containers. Bred in Europe, these trees are rust resistant and virus free. Four varieties are available, and other fruits are under development. More info HERE.



Instant Compost Tea from Mighty Plant is another item I liked. Why? Because it doesn't require the brewing, waiting and mess of some other compost teas. Make it like you would make your instant coffee (but without the hot water, of course); it's as simple as that. As the pamphlet says, it "contains the essence of rich compost in a water-soluble powder." Find more information on this and other products in the Mighty Plant line HERE.



FARWEST THE BIGGEST GREENEST AUGUST TRADE SHOW IN THE WEST 20-22

Two More

I really liked the **Knitted Deco Pots** from American Nettings & Fabric. It was the texture that appealed to me. Rather than having just one fabric layer, these flexible pots have two. The outside layer is a knitted polyethylene shade cloth that can withstand being outside for many years. The inside is a needle-punched nonwoven fabric that allows air permeability. Water will seep out of the pots, so if using as a deco pot for houseplants, customers will need to insert a pot and a saucer into it. Four colors available. Find out more HERE.



Sticking with the pot category, the **Mosaic** pot from IDeL was a stop-me-in-the-aisle product. It's a self-watering pot, with the inner pot having retractable handles for easier lifting of the inner pot up and out. They come in several (possibly six?) colors and sizes, and even in a square shape (the Quadro style). Very mod! Check out all of IDeL's items HERE.



They also have a smaller size appropriate for orchids and other smaller houseplants.





Some Veggies

I mentioned last week that Peppers from Heaven received a Retailers' Choice Award. This week I want to mention a few new peppers from the folks at PRUDAC, the breeders of veggies most specifically for small spaces. Sweet Caroline Red is new in the Ponky Peppers line of plants that start compact and after first harvest the plant grows to a larger size. Sweet Caroline itself is, unlike other immature peppers, a variety that produces sweet and edible fruit at a young stage. The white younger fruit allows the grower to get the plant to market at least two weeks earlier because the fruits stand out from the foliage.



Rocket Peppers, their line of vigorous peppers for larger containers appropriate for balconies, patios and gardens, adds Sweet Mamba Orange.



Two other veggies that caught my eye were the Peas N' Pod Bernard that has, according to their catalog, a "refined habit" with smaller pods. You can grow it in a pot or a raised bed without it getting out of control, and in that location the peas are less likely to be plucked off by pesky birds and squirrels.



The second is Autumn Bee Attraction, a perennial allium that can also be used as an edible and a cut flower. Its white flowers bloom in the spring and fall.



Small veg—it's a big thing! Find out more HERE.



JP's Finds at Cultivate

Green Profit managing editor Jen Polanz weighed in on a few products that stopped her in her tracks:

I could not walk by and ignore the gorgeous wreaths made of magnolia leaves displayed at The Magnolia Company booth. It was the first time the Barberville, Florida, company owned by Matt and Julie Roth exhibited at Cultivate (though they have been at TPIE for many years). They offer bulk bunches, along with bright, lacquer painted wreaths in the Luxe line, and natural looks like the new Serenity Oasis (pictured below some from the Luxe line) and Woodland Wonder wreaths. These pictures really don't do them justice.



All are real magnolia leaves that have been harvested and dried (apparently harvesting really ramps up in October and peaks in November). Matt (below) modeled the box each wreath is packaged in for a high-end retail item.



Here's a product so new the packaging wasn't even ready yet. The popular retail brand Coast of Maine introduced its Organic and Natural Indoor Houseplant Mix at the show, which includes a

blend of coco coir, aged pine, peat moss and organic fertilizer. It will be available in 8 qt. and 16 qt. bag options and should be available for ordering at all the fall distributor shows. Fun fact: Coast of Maine has two manufacturing facilities, one in Maine and the other in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The houseplant mix will be made in PA.





Get Creative

It wasn't just plants and products that caught my eye at Cultivate'23. Some displays did, too. I am including them below so they can inspire you to get creative with your own displays.

Take this one from Terra Nova Nurseries, for instance. I just love the color gradation using heucheras in this display. Maybe you use lilies or poinsettias or spring-flowering bulbs or petunias.



And this intricately integrated cardboard wall in the ThinkPlants booth. I was intrigued with the engineering behind it and love its use to create a room or divide a space. And it seems like it would be easy to fold and move inside your store. While theirs is printed, yours could be spray-painted or it could even be the canvas for some fun floral graffiti art!



Looking for Perennials?

Eason Horticultural Resources has just released its 2024 Hot New Perennials Booklet. This

marks the 15th year of EHR's Hot New Perennials Booklet, featuring an assortment of plants destined to become future best sellers, alongside a curated selection of rare, specialty plants that appeal to avid plant collectors. Take a peek at the varieties they feel are the must-haves for your garden center's benches.



This year EHR has collaborated with the Cincinnati Zoo on the first annual Breeder Showcase and Trials. If you were wondering about the giraffe on the cover, this year's booklet pays homage to the Cincinnati Zoo event, taking you on a "wild adventure" through the new intros you'll want for 2024.

Watch for updates on trial performances throughout the season. Anyone who would like to receive a printed version can request one by emailing marketing@ehrnet.com. Download a copy of this booklet HERE.

Speaking of Perennials

The Perennial Plant Association just announced at their National Symposium that their Perennial Plant of the Year for 2024 will be *Phlox paniculata* Jeana. "Jeana is an exceptional garden phlox," they exclaimed in their press release on the topic. And I can see why. It reaches 5 ft. tall and grows to be about 4 ft. wide, although that does vary geographically. It's known specifically for its impressive flowers held on tall and sturdy stems from midsummer through fall. And pollinators such as hummingbirds and butterflies (especially the Eastern Tiger Swallowtails) love its nectarrich flowers.



Photo credit: Saunders Brothers, Inc.

Discovered by Jeana Prewitt along the Harpeth River near Nashville, Tennessee, Jeana is a standout for its stature. And one of the reasons it was picked as the PPOY is because it's a great "bridging plant," one that helps with the floral transition between early and later flowering perennials. Did I mention it is terrific resistance to powdery mildew?

If you need a fellow garden retailer to vouch for Jeana before you consider selling it, listen to these accolades from Peg Castorani of Gateway Garden Center: "To be a true garden celebrity, a plant must be reliable, beautiful, easy to grow and inspire a sense of happiness to just gaze upon it. *Phlox paniculata* Jeana belongs in the Garden Hall of Fame for her outstanding performance!" Find out all the growing and garden details about Jeana HERE.

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

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Ellen Wells Senior Editor Green Profit

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