

MANTS, TPIE and shrink



THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2024

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#### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

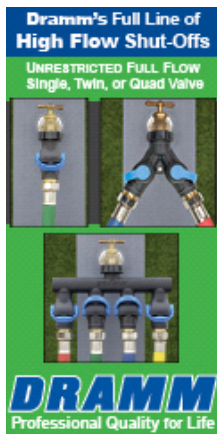
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## MANTS Recap

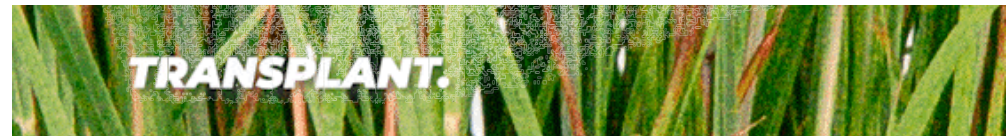
I may be writing this edition of *buzz!* from a hotel room overlooking a yacht called The Great Escape docked behind the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Marina, but let's talk about last week's MANTS for a minute. You may have read in Bossman Beytes' *Acres Online* that I attended the last day of the show, although you wouldn't have known it was the last day from the attitude and the energy in the exhibit hall. The mood was upbeat, the aisles had foot traffic and the booths had visitors.

Others with a better working knowledge of business numbers agree. I had a nice chat with longtime *Green Profit* columnist and good friend **Bill McCurry** about what I had missed the previous two days. He had spoken with folks "on both sides of the booth" and concluded that buyers and vendors alike were preparing for a good year—weather permitting, of course. After talking to a bunch of nursery and garden center folks, Bill did have one suspicion about the



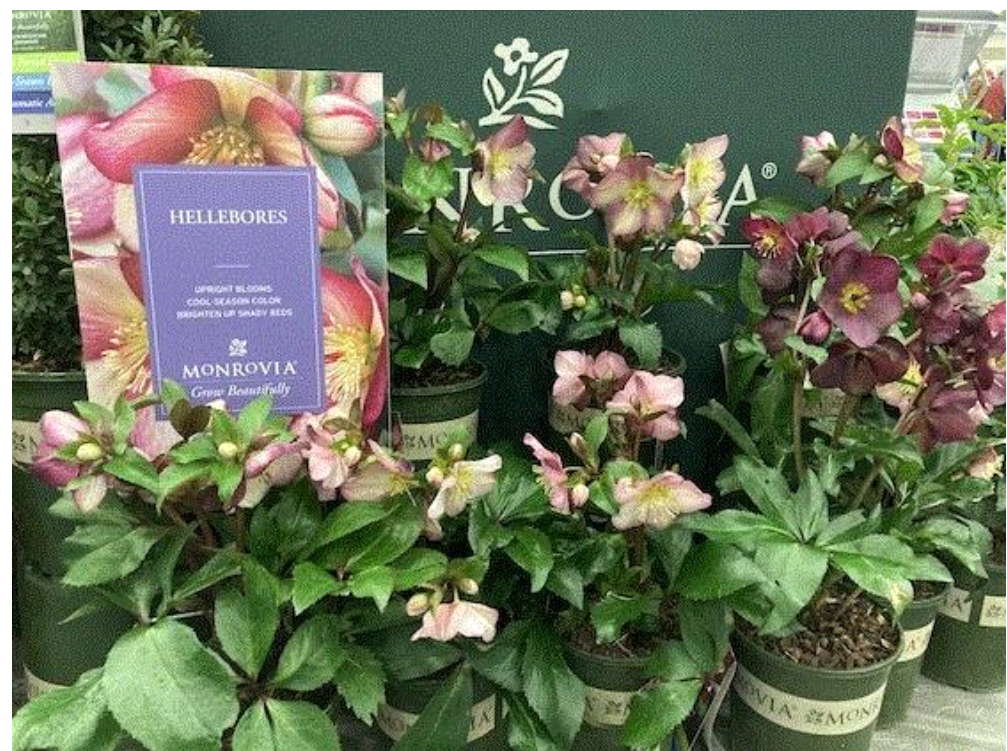
coming sales season: Watch for them to be more mindful of quantities they are buying in (I have a bit more on this topic a few items below).

I ran into friend Mark Highland of [Organic Mechanics](#) in the aisles and he mentioned it had been one of the best MANTS shows for them in a long time—if not the best ever. And I was just emailing with Stuart at Hermitage Farms Nursery who told me that he thought show attendance was good and the mood from exhibitors was upbeat. The only immediate worry on the show floor was about the impending massive weather upheaval and whether it would allow Midwesterners to get home before having to get out to the next show on the schedule.

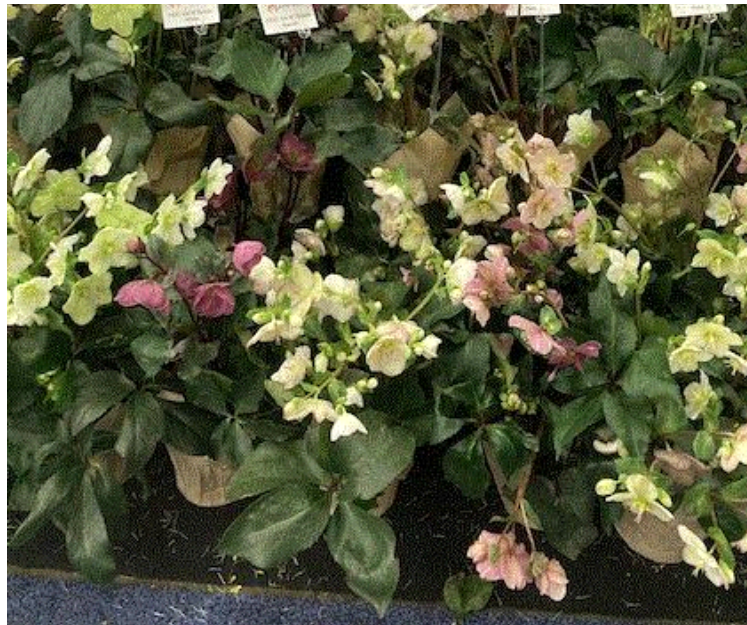


## What'd I See?

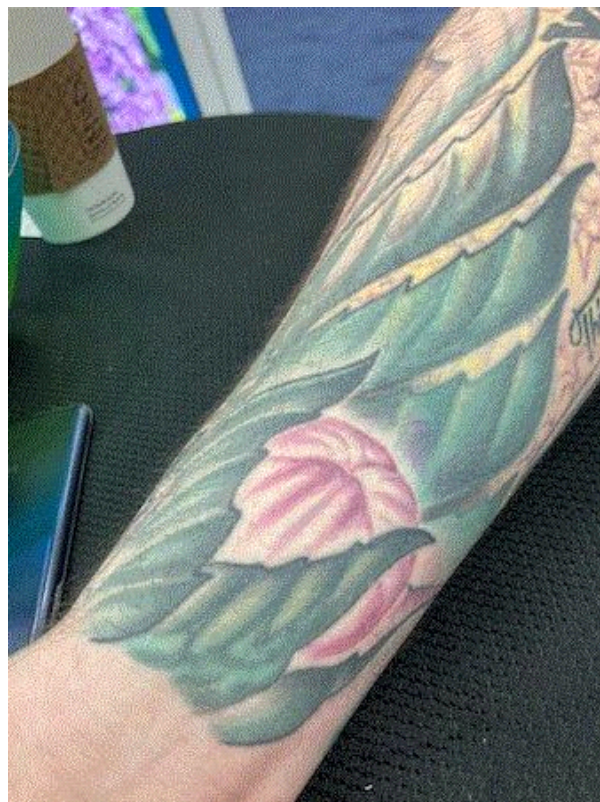
What did I see that piqued my interest? Hellebores are having a moment. Seems like every other booth had some to offer. The first photo are the [Monrovia](#) Ice N Roses Rose, Rosado and Red, and the second is the various varieties from [Aldershot Greenhouses](#).







I even spotted hellebores tattooed on someone's arm! Pride's Corner's Matthew Phillips really likes hellebores (the variety he had inked is Blushing Bridesmaid).

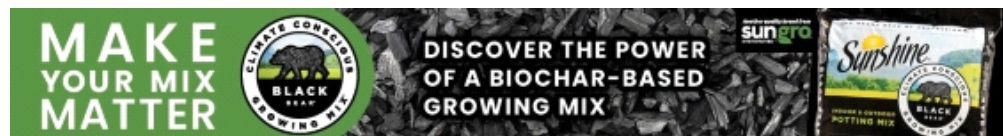


I like the new line from **Oasis Forage Products**. These are snips, pots, foam, collecting bags, wire, etc. for people who want to go out to their gardens or into nature to harvest flowers, foliage and branches so they can create their own floral arrangements. Not only are they answering the "what do I use to be successful?" question, but they are also offering instructions and encouragement to solve the "how do I put this together?" question, too. Plus, they are backed by Oasis and have access to the staff and resources that can help garden centers run with workshop and marketing ideas.



I also liked the new large steel-constructed containers from Colmet. These are assembled with rivets. First, I like the look. And second, this means you can assemble one for display and have several stacked in flat boxes and out of the way. You look at something like this and think, "Well, that just makes sense."





## Proven Winners and Garden State Bulb

Bossmann Beytes also wrote about the recently announced Proven Winners—Garden State Bulb partnership, which I also saw at MANTS. In fact, the partnership is so new, the graphics aren't even final yet.



Proven Winners will be offering a new and exclusive flower bulb program to retailers with the help of Garden State Bulb Company of Vineland, New Jersey. Garden State Bulb is a wholesale supplier of premium Dutch flower bulbs (and bareroot perennials, too) with almost 50 years of knowledge and expertise. It's Proven Winners' first foray into flower bulbs (beyond caladiums, that is) and Garden State's first launch into making premium bulb combinations accessible at retail.

These will be carefully selected multi-genus bulb combos for spring and fall assortments, as well as premium single varieties that are meant to be a focal point in landscapes or home gardens. All programs will feature unique packaging created solely for this collaboration. Like I said, these are still in the works! All bulbs sold by Garden State Bulb under the partnership will be branded and packaged as Proven Winners. Garden State Bulb Co. will continue to sell its existing bulb programs under the Garden State Bulb brand.

Dave Konsoer, vice president of sales at Proven Winners, said this about the partnership; "This brand license partnership gives both companies the ability to expand sales and brand awareness in new areas, making this a natural brand extension."

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



## Back to What Bill Said

Bill McCurry and I were emailing this week about other bits he had heard at MANTS. One of those bits came from an allied rep and was on the topic of inventory control. Bill said this gentleman's goal for the year was to not focus on what retailers were buying, but what and how they were selling. The gist of it, according to this person, was that retailers don't over buy, they *under sell*.

As a rep, he said he would be concentrating on how his retailers were displaying the product and how they were signing it. His theory is that if his retailers sell through the products, that will help build trust and they would be more likely to reorder for next year. You, the retailer, are super busy and could use some tips if not straight-out help with getting your products noticed by the customer. This rep's action plan of having a long-range vision for your sales makes perfect sense.

What is your tactic for selling through this year? Are you looking for more help from your reps? Drop me a note about it [HERE](#).



## On to TPIE

The [Tropical Plants International Expo](#) here in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, kicked off yesterday with a surprisingly good keynote speaker. But before getting into that, LiveTrends Design Group's Bisser Georgiev shared some 2024 show statistics:

- There's 25% more show floor space, thanks to the continuing expansion of the Broward County Convention Center.
- 380 companies are exhibiting—the most they've ever had!
- Of those 380 companies, 128 are first-time exhibitors.
- 15,000 people have registered, and the numbers are likely to go up due to on-site registration.
- Attendees come from 46 states (which four aren't here, by the way?) and 40 countries.

The changes to the convention center are subtle, which really means they did a great job upgrading the facilities and making it seamless. And there are more and better food options (the Korean tofu tacos are surprisingly good!).

Back to that keynote. I said "surprisingly good" because when you hear a magician is speaking, you think, "Well, okay." Harris III spoke about starting with "wow," or starting from a place of creativity, imagination and possibility and then proceeding on to the "how." We lose our childlike sense of wonder and awe as we age, but isn't that where opportunities exist? Yes, his few magic tricks were pretty cool (how'd he get his thumbs in that position??) but the take-home message for me will be to nurture a sense of positivity, wonder and what-ifs.



## What I've Spotted So Far

I've walked half the show so far—starting from the higher-numbers aisles—and several things have caught my attention.





Looks like a line of glazed pottery, right? Wrong! Foliera's new Upcycle line is made in India from metal reclaimed from junked cars. The paint, which really does look like a glaze, is also environmentally friendly. They really wanted to create something that focused on sustainability, and I think they hit the mark. Oh, I should mention these pots have a cork-stoppered drainage hole, too. I spotted three different colors—green, slate gray and black, but they could have more.

Sticking with pottery, I spotted these concrete pots from Concrete Décor. They're actually made with a combo concrete-fiber slurry, each one made by hand. They are sealed so are waterproof, and the painted ones—which will be available soon—will have their paint sealed. Here's their selling point: These are made in Columbia, which means shipping is cheaper and faster than the products made in Asia.



Concrete Decor also has a white pot with black splatches.





## And Some Plants

While I haven't made it to the low-numbered aisles yet, I had heard that Suntory had some very cool new items, so I broke my strict aisle-by-aisle methodology to check them out.



Sun Parasol FiredUp Orange is what Delilah Onofrey called a “natural born thriller.” That upright habit is amazing for such a thin-stemmed plant! She showed me several combos with this as the “thriller”—all were stunning. I believe she said it’s a Dipladenia hybrid of some sort.

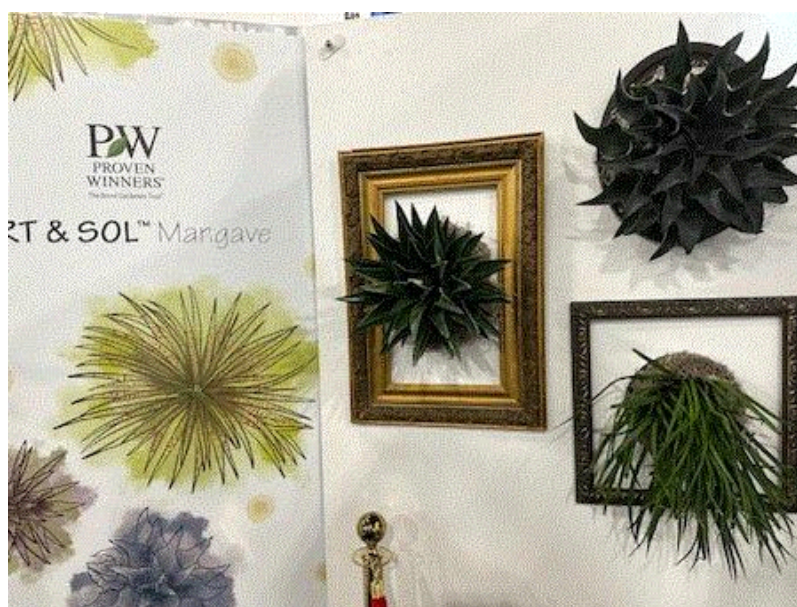
I didn’t even think that purpley blue was in the realm of possibilities for mandevillas, but here it is, Sun Parasol Bluephoria!



If customers are getting a little tired of red mandevillas, Bluephoria is a perfect option. Pair it with white pots or white flowers, or, what if you put it in combination with Suntory’s yellow mandevilla? That would be a fun tropical look.

I also haven’t made my way to the Walters Gardens/Proven Winners ColorChoice booth yet, so this photo of the new Art & Sol line of mangaves is actually from my colleague Kim (thanks, Kim!).





These succulent-esque Manfreda x Agave hybrids are a paradox in a pot. They are sun lovers but can take some shade. They are fine if not watered and also don't mind lots of it. They love company but can go solo if that's what a gardener wants. They are perennials in southern environments and can be annuals in colder places. Options make them awesome.

Walters has a bunch of these mangaves in their breeding program, and they've moved six of their top varieties into the Proven Winners brand. They have limited quantities for 2024, but a wider release—likely with more varieties—is planned for 2025.

That's it for now. I've got more to see today. I'll tell you all about it next week!

## Back to Shrink

Remember last week when I shared with you [consultant Sid Raisch's](#) comments on [shrink](#)? That was just part one of three (or is it four?!). This part might be a more emotional angle on shrink because it deals with trust. Here's what he has to say on the topic:

“Shrink through Employee Theft: Let’s start with a critical issue that might just save some businesses from closing down this year—employee theft. Every retailer is guaranteed to face shoplifting on a daily basis, but employee theft, while typically a less frequent incident, poses a far greater risk. It’s rare to hear people talk openly about embezzlement. Legal proceedings often necessitate silence, whether it’s an allegation or an ongoing case. More than the legalities, it’s the emotional impact—the betrayal, especially when the perpetrator is a family member, is akin to mourning the loss of a close friend, but it’s worse. It’s the death of trust, with the added sting that the perpetrator remains in the family.

Why do trusted employees steal? There are instances where an honest person, feeling wronged by their employer or by employers in general, might justify theft as a form of recompense. Other times, personal circumstances such as debt, illness or addiction drive them to rationalize it. I recall one case where addiction led to over \$40,000 being stolen. I’ve had clients tell me of incidents ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Rarely are the funds fully recovered. Typically court-ordered payments take a lifetime for the thief to repay. Every employer must be vigilant and implement preventative measures. However, the solution isn’t to manage all finances single-handedly. It’s about establishing effective checks and balances and ensuring you can detect a thief quickly if one arises. And right now, call your insurance agent to be sure you’re adequately covered. If you aren’t effective in preventing an occurrence at least insure it.”

Wow, I didn’t realize that employee theft was something you can insure for. Thanks for sharing, Sid! I also want to reiterate from last week about the importance of approaching a consultant first before you take any of the perspectives above and run with them on your own. Consultants are professionals and can best address your situation when they have your specific details to work with.





Ellen Wells  
Senior Editor  
Green Profit

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