

TPIE’s booths, favorites and assorted orchid items



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TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Ball Culture Guide

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
SEED GERMINATION

By JIM NAU

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Good Times with Tropicals

Another Tropical Plant International Expo (aka TPIE) is in the books, and by golly there's a lot for me to go over. The show is nearly three full days and even so, each year I find myself racing to finish the last of the trade show floor rows before closing time on Friday afternoon. And despite the locals bundling up in Arctic apparel in 50F and drizzle, I enjoyed the May-in-New-England-ish weather.

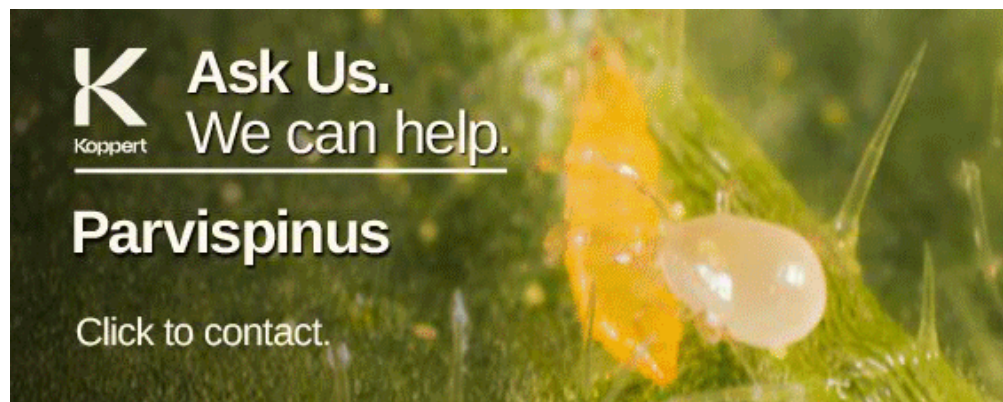
The attendees, who hailed from all 50 states and 50-ish countries, were treated with great and heartfelt hospitality by the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) per usual. It was the last official TPIE for outgoing COO Linda Adams, who for me has been the smiling face of the show all the years I have attended. The trade show floor burst into applause on Friday when Linda's accomplishments and 40 years of service were recognized over the PA system by her grateful colleagues. I wasn't tearing up, *you* were tearing up. I'm expecting a visit soon, Linda!



Chris Beytes snapped this photo of FNGLA's Linda Adams at her last TPIE ... well, as staff!

I heard from various exhibitors that the crowd would come and go in waves. I could tell that there were not as many folks as last year, but last year was the first year back after having been in Tampa for a couple of years, so *everybody* wanted to be back at the ol' stomping grounds that year. Someone told me that they come every other year, and that a lot of people do the same. So last year was a reset of sorts, with fewer folks this year. Even so, I was told 2025 had the second largest pre-registration. Maybe some dropped off due to the extremely weird weather situation in the northern region of the state.

The 100,000 sq.ft. of booth space occupied by more than 400 exhibitors sold out quickly last fall, and the exhibitor quality was fantastic, in my opinion. The really good news is that 60 or more of those 400 were first-time exhibitors! I did my best to visit the newbies, and I will tell you about those that I visited over the next few issues of *Tropical Topics*.



Two New Best Booths

From my reckoning, two of those first-time exhibitors won booth awards. The "Outstanding First Time Exhibitor Award" was given to **The Farmer's Daughter**, a new company with old roots in the

industry (Costa roots, to be specific). The founder, Jacqueline Costa, is the daughter of Mike Costa, who is the uncle of Maria Costa-Smith of Costa Farms. Having been in the horticulture industry herself for more than 20 years and with a background in fashion merchandising, Jacqueline has blended the two to create a brand of gardening supplies and accessories that combine technology, sustainability and quality with styles that are on trend.



The line contains some very stylish and mod planters and raised beds, as well as watering tools, gloves, pruners—even a chic jumpsuit and garden-to-on-the-town sun hat!



Jacqueline, who is wearing one of those chic jumpsuits, is flanked by her dad and her brother, Mike, Jr.

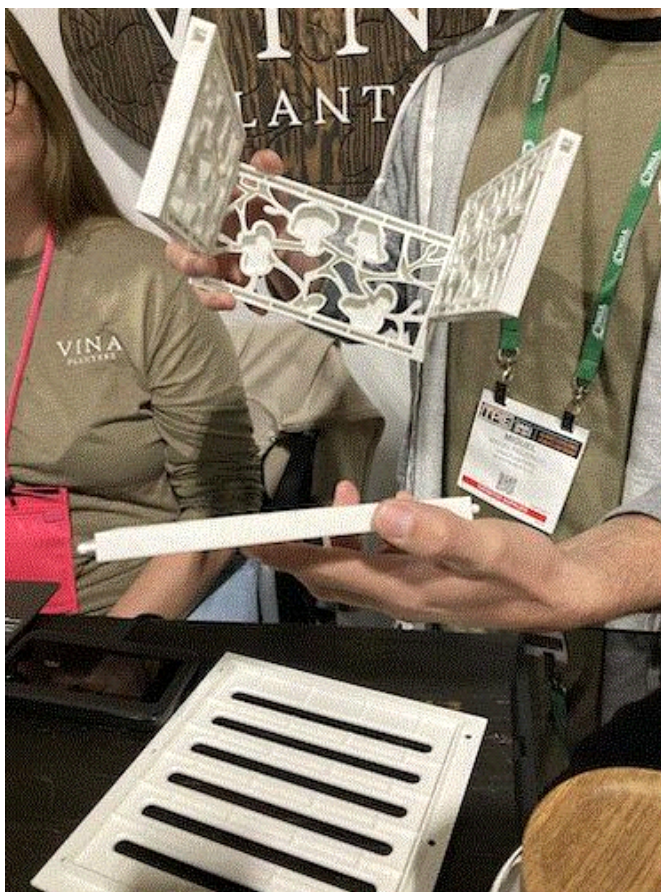
The other first timer, [Vina Planters](#), was awarded the “Best Small Non-Plant Display.” Vina Planters is Sarah Joy and Miguel Figueredo, and they make orchid planters out of 100% recycled injection-molded polypropylene.



Sarah Joy and Miguel Figueredo

Sarah Joy created them based on a picture frame she designed and laser cut for her grandmother Vina. After some trial and error—and a CNC router—she finally landed on the design and structure you see today.





What's so cool about the planters is that they disassemble via recessed stainless steel screws. This allows you to take the entire planter apart to clean, or remove just the bottom to add in some more sphagnum moss while not disturbing the roots. Available in three sizes and four colors. The chains are free! It's a product 10 years in the making, and they officially launched last year. Maybe the best thing about this planter is that it won't disintegrate like the wooden orchid planters do.

These are just two of the 12 awards, which are as follows:

- Best Large Plant Display—305 Farms
- Best Small Plant Display—Florida Tropiculture
- Best Large Non-Plant Display—CTI Living
- Best Small Non-Plant Display—Vina Planters
- Best Use of Large Space—The Plant Company/leafjoy
- Best Use of Small Space—Market Botany
- Excellent Brand Promotion Large—Deroma-Marshall Pottery
- Excellent Brand Promotion Small—Westbrook Greenhouses
- Inspiration at its Best—LiveTrends Design Group
- Excellent Use of Storytelling—Penang Nursery
- Stand Out in a Crowd—ForemostCo
- Outstanding First Time Exhibitor—The Farmer's Daughter



[Show Favorites](#)

Now to the “TPIE Favorites.” These are plants and products found in the New Product Showcase and voted on by show attendees. Maybe you voted for one yourself! Let’s see if you agree.

The Favorite New Foliage Plant is Philodendron Red Congo Variegated from [Penang Nursery](#). If I’m not mistaken, this is a sport of Congo Rojo. Beautiful red leaves, right? They eventually turn to dark green. Such a beauty.



The Favorite New Flowering Plant is Medinilla Royal Glow from [Living Colors Nursery](#). What a stunning cascading flowering stalk! This plant from the Philippines is a quick grower. This one, for instance, is 10 months old from cuttings. It blooms for eight weeks, and does so twice a year. Living Color has limited numbers, so get them when you can. Oh, and they have a red one either already available or coming soon.



There are two **Favorite New Products** this year. The first is **Climb-itt**, a leafjoy product from Proven Winners. I've written about it in this newsletter before, but as a reminder this product line, which consists of poles, stakes, planks, wires and staples, is made from a combination of potato starches and elephant grass. The poles, stakes and planks have a bark-like texture which plants love to grow on, and the poles and planks are stackable. These will last for years in indoor applications and will completely break down in the landfill.



The second is Growth Technology GT Silica by [PlantHaul](#), the U.S. distributor for Growth Technology GT. Why did a boring-sounding product like this win? Hey, I'm not being rude—even the people repping the product told me they were surprised! I spoke with them at length, and this is why they think GT Silica won: Silica is very important for creating strong cell walls. And what is in desperate need of strong cell walls? The lighter leaves on the very in-vogue variegated plants. Silica will help keep the lighter-colored portions of the leaves from browning, or at least enable them to last a bit longer. Plant people know about the benefits of silica, and that's why they think this product is a winner.



If you attended TPIE and had a chance to view the items on display in the New Product Showcase, [tell me what you voted for](#). They're all winners, in my opinion.

Sun Parasol
FiredUp Coral



Speaking of Orchids I

You know you're really excited about a product when you walk away and realize you jotted incoherent notes with lots of !!!! You're just listening so intently to what someone is telling you about it. That's what happened with the Orchid Care Kit from [United Orchids](#).



This packaging isn't the final-final version of the kit, but you get the idea. It comes with some moss, a pot, a stake, clips, a cup for watering, orchid care instructions and a notebook for tracking everything. I could use this! It's a nice add-on for orchid sales. As I recall this will be available March 1. Buy these in for Easter and Mother's Day and other spring holidays.

Speaking of Orchids II

My new friend Sarah Joy has marked the [Santa Barbara International Orchid Show](#) on her must-exhibit list of orchid-related events. The next one, the 77th, is happening March 7-9 at the Earl Warren Showgrounds in Santa Barbara, California. It's one of the oldest, largest and most prestigious orchid shows in the U.S.



SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL ORCHID SHOW

This year's theme for the show is "Exotic Gardens," where you'll be "whisked away to lush, tropical settings," the press release promises. You'll see lots of stunning orchids, of course, and have an array of workshops, vendors and artwork to keep you fascinated for hours. Get your tickets online [HERE](#). I'm hoping Sarah Joy and Miguel will get to exhibit there someday! They'd be a popular vendor, for sure.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions for content, email me about them at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



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Green Profit

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