

Cold weather and Cool Products



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TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:
Probable South Florida Freeze
TPIE Stats and Blue Oil
Scindapsus, Nepenthes & Gesneriad
Fat Boys and Sun Parasols
Alerta de Seminario Web!

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Probable South Florida Freeze

The only thing you want frozen in South Florida is an umbrella drink, but unfortunately this coming weekend the ice may be in the nurseries and landscape and not the glass.

I just received word from Ball Horticultural's Foliage and Tropicals Technical Sales Manager Andrew Britten that the promised warm winter is looking to be far from it. "The forecast continues to drop down here," he emailed me today (Wednesday). "It looks like we may have a freeze here Saturday and Sunday nights. This is the coldest it has been here since 2010, the last time we iced in."

Thu 29	73°/56°		Mostly Sunny
Fri 30	68°/52°		Showers
Sat 31	67°/34°		AM Showers
Sun 01	53°/33°		Sunny
Mon 02	59°/37°		Sunny

The Weather Channel's weekend forecast for Homestead, Florida, as of January 27.

Andrew said that where he is in Redland it typically gets about 3 degrees colder than Homestead, so he has a right to be worried about a freeze. One night is enough, but possibly two? That might be too much to bear. Sure, nurseries are in danger, but many have means to protect their plants. Andrew mentioned a few of those methods in a previous *Tropical Topics*

(read that [HERE](#)). It's the residential landscapes that will likely experience the most loss. In fact, Andrew wrote, "My landscape is going to take a hit." Good thing those nurseries will have some protected product to help consumers fill in the gaps this freeze might create.

As an aside, I flew into Orlando on January 17 in advance of TPIE to visit Bossman Beytes. The Orlando area had earlier experienced a few nights of temperatures in the 30s and 40s. You could see browning and crispy leaf tips on various palms, hibiscus, clerodendron, bougainvillea, Hawaiian ti and others. An Orlando friend just texted me about the upcoming freezing weekend (even more chilly than South Florida), "We're screwed." Whoever predicted a warmer than usual winter for Central and South Florida was gravely mistaken.



TPIE Stats and Blue Oil

The whole point of me traveling south was to attend the Tropical Plant International Expo in much-warmer Ft. Lauderdale. It was a great show per usual, made better only with access to the now-open Omni. The attendee mood was upbeat—I think a combined result of the prospect for a profitable year and easy weather.

As for unofficial trade show stats, they had their largest pre-registration ever at more than 7,000 attendees from around 40 countries. Exhibitor space sold out even though they added four or five more aisles to fit in 475 exhibitors—100 of those first-timers—and there was a wait list of I think 100 exhibitors. Someone on the FNGLA staff said the show is "punching higher." That's a great way to put it.

I gathered enough content about plants, products and people during my time at TPIE to last for at least a couple of months of this newsletter. Which shall I address first? You're all plant people, so let's start there.

Specifically, let's start with the plant winners of The Garden Center Group's Cool Product Awards, since eight of the 15 Cool Product winners were plants.

Blue Oil Fern (*Microsorium thailandicum*) from Casa Flora. I saw this and said to the person presenting it that someone must have come around and painted it like a poinsettia. Not at all! That shimmering iridescence is real. And hard to take a great photo of, too, I now see. It's native to the shaded understories of Southeast Asian rainforests, with that color originating from microscopic leaf structures rather than pigment. Nature is amazing.



That blue is *real!*



Scindapsus, Nepenthes and a Gesneriad

Scindapsus hederaceus Blue Albo from **Costa Farms**. The first of Costa's two Cool Product winners, Scindapsus Blue Albo is a climber with blue-green leaves variegated in creamy-white. And good news for the consumer, Blue Albo is easy to grow in the average home and adds style and flair to boot.



Costa's second winner is another Scindapsus, this one being **S. coriaceus Variegated**. Scindapsus are trending plants now, I think because they are climbers, and this variegated version is a hit with its dark green leaves streaked with electric, neon-green. Like the previous scindapsus, this also holds up well to indoor environments, which applies to homes and retail interiors, by the way.



Nepenthes Midnight from **Deroose Plants**. Deroose has won a Cool Product Award previously for their pitcher plants, but this one is different. Just look at the color of this variety called Midnight—it's nearly black. I believe I heard it mentioned that this variety's pitchers are a bit smaller than the traditional version. It's so unusual, so who cares!



***Michaelmoelleria* Sapphire** from Altman Specialty Plants by way of Dewar Nurseries. In the Gesneriad family and related to African violets, this plant is the one and only species in the *Michaelmoelleria* genus. The lavender bloom is somewhat Streptocarpus-like, but take a look at those variegated leaves! I didn't get close enough to touch them but chances are they are a bit fuzzy or textured. Correct me if I am wrong, please! (Dr. Michael Möller works as a molecular systematist and cytologist at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.)



Fat Boys and Sun Parasols

***Philodendron martianum* Fat Boy Variegated** from **Penang Nursery**. *Philodendron* Fat Boy isn't new, but this Variegated form is pretty spectacular. The "fat boy" moniker refers to its swollen stems, and the glossy and variegated form shows up with splashes of shades of cream, lime and deep green.



Sun Parasol FiredUp Magic Pink from **Suntory Flowers** via **Sun Fire Nurseries**. Suntory debuted this newer form of the Sun Parasol *Dipladenia* hybrids a couple of years ago, and they, too, have won numerous awards. The FiredUps have an upright habit and narrow leaves. Magic Pink is one of two new additions to the Sun Parasols, with this one having changing hues of pink and peach.



And surprise—the second addition to the Sun Parasols received a Cool Product Award, too. **Sun Parasol XP Maui Sunset** is part of the Sun Parasol XP, with the XP representing “extreme performance” with superior branching and flower power. Maui Sunset has extra large coral-orange blooms with outstanding performance.



I will include more plant winners in other categories in the next *Tropical Topics*. If you're interested in the other seven Cool Product Award winners, which all happen to be great items for garden centers, check out my *buZZ!* newsletter coming out later this week.

Alerta de Seminario Web!

Considering that February is a few days away, you should know that UConn Extension's 4-part webinar series for the Spanish-speaking green industry workforce starts next week—February 6, to be exact. Taking place every Friday in February at Noon Eastern, this free webinar series is an opportunity to strengthen skills in the following areas:

- Irrigation Management
- Pest and Disease Monitoring and Management
- Occupational Health

Registration is free and required in order to participate. Learn more about the webinars and register for them [AQUI](#).

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

Ellen Wells
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Green Profit

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