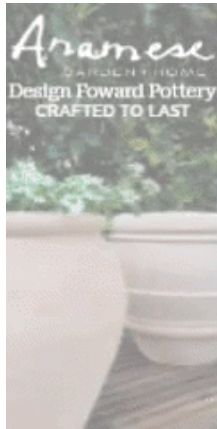


6 ways to sell more orchids, Farwest’s winning tropicals, and the Rococo revival



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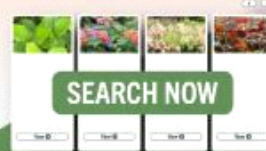
TROPICAL TOPICS

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Hot Tropicals from the PNW
Six Ways to Sell More Orchids
The Last Three
Rococo's Revival

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Hot Tropicals from the PNW

If you subscribe to my *buZZ!* e-newsletter for garden retailers, you'll know that I saved the last three Retailers' Choice Awards from August's Farwest Show for *Tropical Topics* because they are appropriate for this newsletter's content. Tropicals and houseplants winning awards at a Pacific Northwest trade show, imagine that! And if you are so entrenched in the tropicals world that you don't know what the Farwest Show is (it's heavily northern tier tree and shrub focused) and have no idea what the Retailers' Choice Awards are (think TPIE's Cool Product Awards), you can read about it all [HERE](#).

The retailers who walked the Farwest Show floor looking for plants and products they themselves would sell at their own operations found three large tropical plants they felt would be sure sellers, and hence RCA winners. Those three varieties are:

Variegated Hawaiian Banana (*Musa x Paradisiaca AeAe*) from **Van Wingerden**

Greenhouses. The retailer judges felt this variegated banana would be a winner at retail. Also known as Sacred Banana or Koaie, this banana is native to the Hawaiian Islands and gets its name from these strikingly green-and-white striped leaves. When grown in-ground in optimal conditions, this variety can get to be 15 ft. tall! But when grown in pots, they are smaller and much more manageable.



Elephant Ear Zebrina (*Alocasia Zebrina*) from **Youngblood Nursery**. Zebrina is nothing new and the Farwest RCA judges have definitely seen this variety before. But they had never seen one so LARGE. Take a look at this plant!



Grown in a 15 gal. pot, Zebrina grew into a plant with visual impact and presence. Take a look at its green and white stems—very Beetlejuice, wouldn't you say? I would say it wasn't so much the variety that was the winner here (no offense, Zebrina) but the size and drama this particular plant created.

Philodendron nangaritense, also from **Youngblood Nursery**. At first glance, you might think this is some sort of colocasia or other big-leaved tropical. Nope! It's a philodendron. This one is

originally from the Nangaritza Valley in southern Ecuador at the intersection of the Andes and the Amazon. A closer look at the leaves reveals they have silver- or cream-colored veins along lance-shaped, deep green leaves. Again, the size is what's stunning. The lesson with both the Zebrina and this philodendron is to grow something unbelievably big. It has impact!



Six Ways to Sell More Orchids

In a lot of the country, our summer annuals are being replaced by short-lived fall-colored decorative items that'll fill in for a scant few months. Folks will move back indoors, and they'll honestly miss the colors their gardens and patios provided all summer. Consumers will want indoor color, and a great way to provide that is with orchids.



Orchids can be a strong year-round category for IGCs, and the fall and winter months are the time to sell consumers on that fact. Just having orchids in stock is not enough, though. Having can't-miss displays and fresh inventory, providing customer education and taking care of the details can help turn orchids into a category that customers keep returning to.

I recently spoke to Kayla Hadeed, greenhouse specialist at [Lukas Nursery](#) in Oviedo, Florida, and Alis Zavala, orchid specialist at [Flora & More](#)—a wholesale distributor and supplier of premium orchids, select plants, containers and floral accessories—for some tips on making the most of orchids at retail.

1. Think beyond the holidays. Lukas Nursery see especially strong sales around Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, but they sell "tons of orchids" year round, according to Kayla. Alis sees plenty of opportunities to sell throughout the year. Orchids can be positioned as everyday gifts and as long-lasting flowering plants for homes and commercial spaces. She says the second half of the year can be particularly strong in Florida and Texas. Orchids provide the indoor color folks are looking for, she says. "The experience of longevity and enjoyment is something you want to repeat," Alis says.

2. Make the orchid display a destination. At Lukas, most of the Phalaenopsis orchids are grouped in a large, three-tiered display, with the more exotic orchids displayed separately. This organization allows customers to see their options while making it easier for staff to provide consistent care.

Alis suggests IGCs should use their unique selling environment to their advantage. Unlike customers shopping for speed and convenience elsewhere, such as a grocery store, garden center customers are often there to browse and discover something unexpected. "In the garden center, they're looking to be lost, to spend time and be surprised," she says. Rotating the colors, varieties and displays for customers so they can choose their own combinations all contribute to that experience of discovery.

3. Mini orchids to the max. Miniature or "teacup" Phalaenopsis are a particularly strong seller at Lukas Nursery. Kayla estimates the nursery has sold roughly 350 to 400 of them so far this year, about as many as their regular Phalaenopsis. "They're cute, they're small, and they're typically not as expensive as the other decorative orchids we have," Kayla says.

Lukas also places some of its small orchid arrangements near the checkouts as last-minute gift ideas. Alis, who does business with Lukas, likes this strategy. "I love that they're bringing orchids to other areas, and bringing in the right order at the right size," she says.



Education, Details and Someone in Charge

Kayla and Alis continue their orchid-selling tips.

4. Use education to build customer confidence. Kayla says customers' lack of confidence can be a major barrier to orchid sales. Kayla has seen customers who previously bought orchids from grocery stores or big box retailers, lost the blooms and concluded they simply couldn't grow orchids. Education can help to change that perception.

"I think that education on proper orchid care definitely helps people build up their confidence in caring for orchids," Kayla says. To help, Lukas provides QR codes linking to orchid care information and offers opportunities for customers to learn about maintaining their new orchid.

5. Keep them looking perfect at retail. Pay attention to your orchid displays! Remove spent blooms, pull declining plants and avoid crowding plants so flowers aren't damaged by neighboring plants or fans. Kayla has found that last detail can make a direct difference in sales. "When people are buying orchids, it's primarily as a gift, so it has to look perfect," she says.



Kayla also points out that customers naturally compare plants sitting side by side: "If you have two orchids next to each other and one has one more bloom than the other, you know which one they're going to pick." She's right because I've done the counting myself!

6. Make someone responsible for the orchids. A dedicated orchid specialist isn't necessary, but someone should have responsibility for checking the plants regularly. Taking care of the orchids is part of Kayla's greenhouse responsibilities. She says they don't require constant attention, but they can't simply be left alone. "The orchid department doesn't need that much attention, but it definitely needs someone paying attention to it at least once a week," she says.

Regularly checking water, removing damaged blooms and overall maintaining the display helps extend the life of the orchid inventory and ensures that customers take home healthy and attractive plants. As Kayla says, "You want to set them up for success."



Do you have other orchid display and selling techniques that have proven successful? I want to know about them! Drop me a note and a photo or two [HERE](#).



Rococo's Revival

Another topic I began covering in [last week's buzz!](#) e-newsletter is the 2027 Garden Trends Report just released by Garden Media Group. There is one in particular that I believe is ideally suited to the tropicals industry. And that trend is Rococo.



The 2027 Garden Trends Report shows a razzle-dazzling example of the Rococo vibe.

What *is* Rococo? It's an 18th Century style that emerged in France as a deliberate contrast to the stiffness of the prevailing Baroque style. The style is gilded and full of richness and color and is intimately playful. In a word, it's overflowing.

And it so represents tropical floral style.



As the Garden Trends Report says, the 2027 version of Rococo is “ornate, romantic, abundant and unapologetically extra. Asymmetry. Ruffles. Gilded details. Femininity. Jewel-tone palettes. Gardens overflowing with unruly abundance.” That sounds like a lushly flowering tropical garden to me.

In fact, *Country & Town House* magazine named Rococo Revival its interior trend for 2026. And as we know, garden design is always close on the heels of interior design.

Speaking of garden design, the Garden Trends Report has an excellent quote from garden influencer Erin Schanan, aka The Impatient Gardener, that I think sums it up:

“With the new Rococo garden movement, maximalist plants and garden designs are radiating exuberance over restraint. Trends always seem to ‘over-correct,’ and this playful, often satirical design trend offers a complete 180 from the staid monotone and minimalist plantings of recent years.”

Tropical plants are meant for this.

What are you seeing in terms of this trend? Drop me a note about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

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

Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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