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Winter Trade Show Outlook: Positive

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Attendance was up at many of this year's winter trade shows and orders were being written (which is a better way to get a read on the upcoming spring). In Baltimore, MANTS drew more than 11,000 registrants including exhibitors to the 47th annual trade show. They visited 952 exhibiting companies spread out over 1,536 booths. Visitors traveled from 45 states and 15 other countries to take in the three-day event.

Down in Kansas City, Missouri, the 2017 Western had a big turnout with a 17% uptick in attendees. According to Executive Director Sarah Bibens, a long-time exhibitor told her he had written two of the biggest orders he'd ever written at a trade show.

Those who made it even farther south to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, for TPIE, shared the aisles with about 6,300 other friends from 47 states and 49 countries, as well as more than 800 booths and 400-plus exhibitors. That's a slight increase in overall attendance, with a marked increase in interiorscaper attendance, says Jennifer Nelis, director of communications and public relations for the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscaper Association.

At the Atlanta International Gift & Home Furnishings Market at AmericasMart, a record number of new buyers descended upon the three buildings in downtown Atlanta to do some serious shopping. Along with new buyers, the eight-day event saw increases in international attendance. "Customer confidence was strong and sustained across every category and floor," says Kim Higgins, AmericasMart Gift & Home Furnishings Advisory Board Chairman. "The buyers were here, ready to buy and they bought big."

Of course, the biggest show of them all—IPM Essen in Germany—pulled in more than 57,000 visitors and nearly 1,600 exhibitors from 45 countries. According to show runners, more than a third of those visitors placed orders at the show. **GP**