

Features

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Stuff We Love

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Each year, the editors pick the products, concepts or displays that resonated. Here are our faves this year.



Ellen Wells

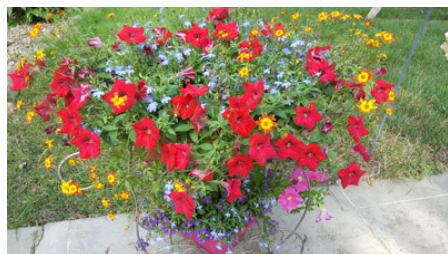
I'm a Seasonal Display Convert

There, I said it. After five years of having a very fine custom-built hardwood container on my front stoop—and after five years of trying to Martha Stewart it myself—I've come to understand, enjoy, and yes, love, the fact that folks like you have already created something beautiful that I can just drop right in. That holiday display from 2016 is nice, huh? That actually inspired me enough try my hand at crafting a little something for this fall.

No-Till Gardening

Used to be that “correct gardening procedures” would begin with trenching—digging a trench a foot or two deep, then turning the soil from an adjacent trench into it. Lots of work!

I'm now into the no-till gardening technique that leaves the soil biology intact to support and benefit plant roots. Just dig a hole big enough for a transplant or a small furrow for some seeds. It dawned on me this summer that no-till gardening is likely why the edible perennials and herb portion of my garden—into which I tuck some annual herbs and leafy greens—is growing like gangbusters, while the constantly disrupted succession gardening section is lackluster despite organic fertilizer applications.



Jennifer Polanz

Sun, Fun and Bee-Friendly

I have a rather specific gardening style I implement for most of the summer. It's called “I'm shuttling two kids to multiple summer camps and other activities daily and, oh crap, did I water that within the last week?” And guess what? The Suntory mix Bee Colorful worked well with that style (a

style I suspect I am not alone in perfecting). Consisting of Beedance Painted Red, Lobelia Trailing Sky Blue and Surfinia Deep Red, the mix provided a lovely pop of color to my patio. It also falls in line with the pollinator attractors

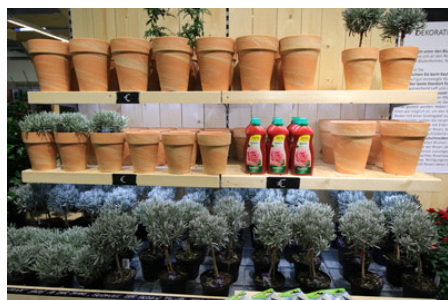
that consumers are looking for and—as a bonus—the deer stayed away from it.



Nature Calls

One of my favorite things this year came from our local Metroparks. At a location called Penitentiary Glen, they installed an all-natural kids' playground, complete with tree stumps, a shallow pond with stepping stones, hills with tunnels cut into them and these amazing raised bed gardens. This is not the playground for dress clothes and kids are highly encouraged to play in the dirt. They can explore the fruits and vegetables

growing on the plants and plant their own seeds. What better way to capture the imagination of the next generation than to get them to play in our products?



Chris Beytes

The Image of Sophistication

My two favorite ideas of 2017 are evident in this photo I snapped in Essen, Germany, at the annual IPM Essen trade show in January.

Idea #1 is using chalkboard paint on the edges of shelves and tables to create a spot for pricing or product information. You can mask it off neatly or make it a casual brush stroke, as suits your store's style. Write on it with

real chalk or chalk markers (penmanship counts, so identify your staff calligraphist). As with all signage, remember to keep the information up to date.

Idea #2 is under each shelf: LED lighting that brings attention to the products below. You don't realize how dark it is under a shelf until you see it illuminated, then you wonder why you didn't do it sooner. (Inset: Soon after seeing this at IPM, I noted that my local grocery store had installed lighting on the candy displays at the registers, to great effect.)



Jennifer Zurko

Switch-a-roo

As someone who believes in a more low-maintenance garden, pre-made mixed containers you can pick up from the garden center are a wonderful thing. But, really, I feel a little more accomplished when I make my own, which is what I did here with some plants from Proven Winners. I have my old reliable pot I put on the front step and I've usually planted only one thing in there—tuberous begonias or caladiums. But this year, I did the old thriller-spiller-filler thing, using Prince Tut Cyperus as my thriller (which is WAY more interesting than dracaena), Lemon Coral Sedum and Bright Lights Double Moonglow Osteospermum (behind the cyperus) as fillers, and Supertunia Mulberry Charm Petunia (left) and Superbells Over Easy Calibrachoa (right) as the spillers.

Toward the beginning of fall, the osteo, petunia and calibrachoa started to fade, but the sedum and cyperus still looked really good, so I kept them and replaced the other three with mums. It worked as a great fall combo.

Pepper Roulette

I'm a container vegetable grower and most of the time I have a lot of success, but for some reason, I've never been able to grow hot peppers well. In the past, I've had plants that produced very little or I would cut into one and find a pepper maggot inside. Blech!

This year, I was lucky enough to get my hands on a Dragon Roll Pepper plant from Burpee and it was my favorite edible I grew this year. Not only was it relatively low-maintenance, but it produced TONS of peppers that we got to enjoy all summer. I would pick a bunch and flash fry them in a little olive oil with some sea salt and pepper. Dip them in Ranch dressing and they're a great snack or appetizer.

Since it's a shishito pepper, I wasn't familiar with it until I tried it at Spring Trials, when I learned that about one in 10 peppers is pretty spicy. It seemed that all of the hotter peppers happened to be the ones my husband ate. Which is funny because it wasn't me. **GP**

