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Thank Your Buyer

Jennifer Polanz



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As I write this I'm a week back from visiting AmericasMart in Atlanta. In case you've never been, it's three giant buildings full of every kind of product you can imagine: giftware, holiday décor, home accents, gourmet food, toys, jewelry, apparel and, of course, garden accents. It's, in one word, overwhelming. I often track my steps on my phone and one day I logged 8.85 miles walking while at the market. I've always been amazed at retail buyers who can go into the market knowing what they want and come out still on budget. The place is a total impulse wonderland.

So what can I take away from my nearly three days there? First, let's talk trends (to see some of these first-hand, I made some videos that are posted to the Green Profit Facebook page). Just about every home décor showroom I visited had some sort of the following: a green wall (either live or fake, but mostly fake), lots of neutrals with pops of color here and there, white shiplap

and wood accents, and a very defined accent wall painted a warm, dark color (think chocolate, navy blue and dark gray, almost black).

On the whimsy side, everywhere I looked I was surrounded by llamas, unicorns, llamacorns, mermaids and flamingos. I also got the inside scoop from one vendor who said sloths are coming into fashion, and sure enough, there also were sloths. These make fun accents on the indoor décor side.

The farmhouse style is still very much in play this year in every aspect of home décor, including for the holidays. I saw farmhouse Halloween, farmhouse Christmas and farmhouse Easter designs. Lots of wood accents and lots of repurposed materials. It's impossible to say this for sure, too, but I believe there was more of an emphasis on Made in America products, as well. For those that weren't made in the U.S., there were still some lingering concerns over the impact of tariffs on pricing. I saw a sign in one showroom that made it clear prices may increase if tariffs go into effect, while I heard other vendors have sent out letters stating as such to customers. Right now, the tariffs are still in limbo, postponed until March 1 while U.S. and Chinese trade representatives negotiate. I'd like to hear more from readers on this issue—email me at jpolanz@ballpublishing.com if it's either impacting your business as a vendor or if you're a retailer concerned about prices.

Back to the task at hand: you'll be able to see some of these trends I just talked about playing out in the indoor pottery we're featuring this month. Another segment I saw lots of new products in at the show is birding. And we happen to have a story from John Johnston this month on how to capitalize on those customers who love their

feathered friends.

Here's a trend we'd like to start—offering a seasonal service for switching out mixed containers. Customers are clamoring for containers, but often don't come back for more once the season is over. Find out strategies to keep these customers in the loop for new container mixes.

And finally, one trend that isn't going away any time soon is social media. Fortunately, we (and you) have Amanda Thomsen to help you navigate this world with app recommendations to help punch up your posts.

Oh, and to circle back to the original discussion about the gift markets (or really any trade show that requires your buyers to purchase products), give them a pat on the back (or yourself, if you happen to be the buyer, too) for taking on that task and for spending the business' money wisely. It's a tough gig and no amount of free sample soaps makes it any easier. **GP**