

Features

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New Look, New Products

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In August we hit the big city to attend the IGC Show, now at its new home at Chicago's McCormick Place, a decision forced by the closing of the exhibit space at Navy Pier. A move like that is a major earthquake for any show and we wanted to see how they coped.

Pretty well, we'd say, considering. Here are the pluses and minuses that we could spot:

Plus: It's still Chicago in August, when the temperature can be 75F or 100F. Clear skies and moderate temperatures made it possible to enjoy the city while attending the show.

Minus: Unlike Navy Pier, McCormick Place is not walking distance from anything except a few hotels and restaurants.

Plus: The trade show hall has twice the space of Navy Pier's and lots of windows for a bright, spacious show that made for easy navigation and good picture-taking.

Minus: All that extra space made some question if the numbers of exhibitors or attendees had shrunk. (We asked show owner Jeff Morey about that, but he said his policy has always been to never talk numbers—it's about the quality of the exhibitors and audience, not the quantity.) We can't guess at either number, but we found plenty of booths worth visiting and chatted with plenty of quality garden center folks in the aisles.

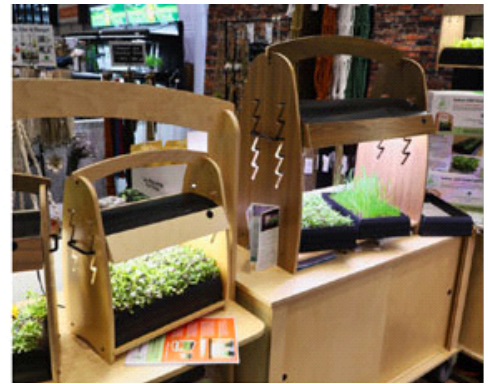
Minus: Once you get dropped at McCormick, you still have a long, long walk to the Lakeside Center that houses the IGC Show. (But simply ask your cab/rideshare driver to drop you at Lakeside and they will, saving you the walk.)

Plus: The educational sessions were right on the tradeshow floor, and the keynote and concert stage were just outside the hall, making it super easy to access all the events.

Minus: Fewer lunch options at McCormick compared to Navy Pier.

Plus: A five-minute walk away is a place called Fatpour Tap Works. Excellent eats! And cabs and rideshares are easy to grab for a quick ride to the Loop.

Plus: New products for your garden centers! That's why you come to the show, right? For new products and to network. There was still plenty of both to keep you busy for the next season. Read on for what stopped us in our tracks.



Sunshine Ceramica

Colorful, hand-painted pots caught our eye as we began down the first aisle. Started by a UK couple who fell in love with everything about Spain, the pots from Sunshine Ceramica are made and hand-painted in Spain, and are inspired by and named for the colorful cities in that country. There's a wide variety of designs, and sizes and shapes available. New this year is the Madrid planter style, and the Cadiz color and design (the blue and white in the background). www.sunshineceramica.com

dZi Handmade

Often today consumers want to hear the backstory of a product they're considering and they want it to be a positive one. dZi Handmade has one of those stories, as a member of the Fair Trade Federation that buys products producers in Kathmandu, Nepal, and distributes them in the U.S. These wool products include everything from a line of birdhouses called Wild Woolies (pictured is the best seller in that line) to planters (part of the Fair Trade Home & Garden line) and holiday décor (the Fair Trade Holiday line). Another tidbit: the company name is a Tibetan word for an eye-bead that's considered to be a powerful charm. www.dZi.com

LED Habitats

Indoor growing products are becoming more ubiquitous at hort industry trade shows, but everyone has a different design or hook. LED Habitats LLC showcased a couple of different options at the show, including two sizes of grow lights with a cabinet (you can choose between Maple, Cherry or Walnut finish). The smaller one is counter-top size and can be easily moved, while the larger one has three times the growing area of the smaller one. They come with wicking grow trays, seed mat and starter soil, and are made in New Mexico.

According to Klaus Messerer, design and production manager for LED Habitats, the company worked with researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to develop the LED light spectrum that's offered in the cabinets and the high-yield stand-alone lights, as well as the undercabinet habitat seen at the show. www.ledhabitats.com



ApricotMint

If you're looking for something artistic and stylish, these glass terrariums painted on one side from ApricotMint might

satisfy your needs. These are “art glass planters,” that are mouth-blown glass and handcrafted. Other offerings from ApricotMint include LED-lit vases, some of which have LED lights built in, while with others, the light can be dropped in the bottom. The company also has a new line of home décor items like birds, roosters, turtles and frogs.

www.apricotmint.com

Terra Designs

Vintage is still a big hit in a lot of areas and Terra Designs has a whole host of vintage-style designs to satisfy the farmhouse look. The company offers a wide variety of different styles and imprints on planters and crocks of all shapes and sizes. Along with the crocks highlighted at the show, the company has distressed wood products, fiber clay planters and metal products. www.terraproducts.com

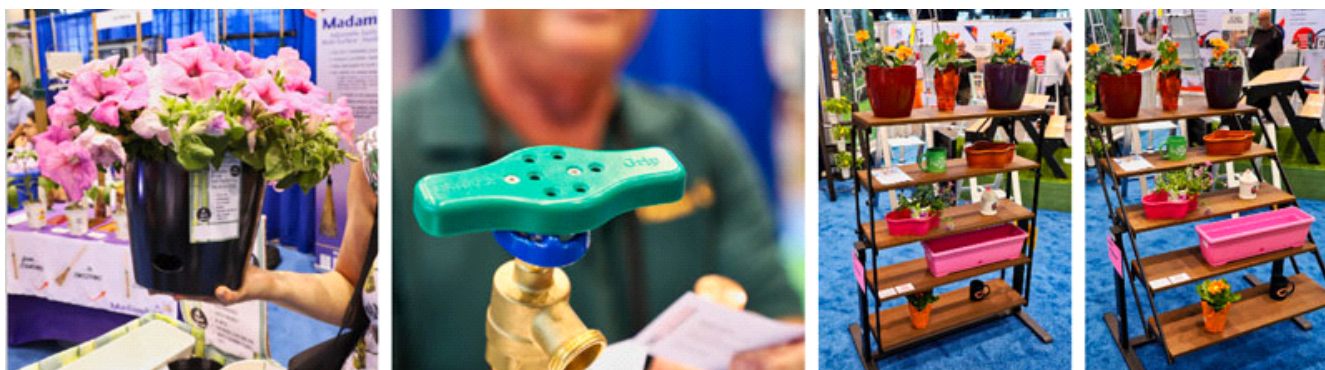
Boost

Consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious and now is a great time to start carrying more products to help reduce waste, if you aren't already. Boost showed off multiple compost bins, as well as biodegradable liner bags for countertop compost bins that can be thrown in the larger composter. The composters range from a tumbler that holds 65 gallons to a dual compartment tumbler holding 42 gallons and a 50-gallon tumbler with wheels.

www.boostonlinestores.com

EZ Shipper

Growers may be familiar with this company, but did you know the independent garden center channel is EZ Shipper's fastest-growing channel? They offer a one-way shipping solution with no recovery or disposal costs with customizable racks, says Ron Sims, director of business development and marketing. EZ Shipper delivers the racks to growers, and once the product is shipped to retailers, a team will come in within five business days to break down the racks and haul them away. “The whole concept is to eliminate damage and waste,” he adds. EZ Shipper also has a Rack Tracking system that offers a simple way to track shipments. www.EZRack.com



Bamboo Blooms

At first look, these planters look like plastic. However, they're actually made of bamboo fiber and they're self-watering to make it even easier on consumers. They feature a built-in water well separated from the soil to provide a constant level of moisture to the roots and prevent excess water runoff. The planters are made of bamboo and cornstarch, and after about four years of use, they can be composted in a typical backyard compost bin. They come in two sizes right now, as well as windowboxes and multiple colors. www.bamboo-blooms.com

Faucet Grip

There's nothing fancy about this product—just a good old-fashioned “what a great idea” concept that can help a lot of people, especially older people, who have trouble turning faucets on and off. The Faucet Grip attaches to the spigot handle and makes it very easy to turn (it was tested by us at the show and it works well). An inner case pack

comes with 24 products, while the master case pack comes with 12 inner cases. These would be great in an irrigation section or at the cash wrap as an impulse buy. www.faucetgrip.com

Spinwood

The furniture from this company with a funky name can wow your customers with their versatility and style. The Dutch company has created a high-quality table that convert into a cabinet with just a hand movement. These tables could be used in the retail setting for display or they could be sold to customers looking to maximize their space available. Spinwood also has a garden bench that converts into a picnic table. The bench and the table both come with a 10-year warranty on the steel frame and two-year warranty on the wood. www.spinwood.nl



A Pot for Pot

Probably the most talked-about booth and company at the show (and the only one to our knowledge to garner a feature in the Chicago Tribune) is the A Pot for Pot people, who had an actual marijuana plant in their booth. They, of course, are not selling the plant, but grow kits for cannabis, herbs and/or vegetables. The Complete 2-Gallon Kit, for example, includes a breathable fabric pot, drain saucer, super soil blend, precision scissors, seedling pot and pellet, mycorrhizal rooting booster, watering can and leaf shine, fortified top soil mix, a grow guide, collectible stickers and a seed coupon. The company also has a 5-Gallon Kit and expansion kits for both sizes. www.apotforpot.com

ModFountain

Anyone looking to up their fountain and statuary game will be excited to hear about ModFountain, a company created by sculptor Randy Bolander to create fountains for modern garden installations. His line of products range from large water features to tabletop mini fountains. They're all minimalist designs and many are created with corten architectural steel. Randy has installations all over the country, including in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Seattle and more. Each piece is signed and includes a certificate of authenticity, making it a collectable art piece as much as it is a garden fountain. www.modfountain.com

Pottery Pots

The Dutch company Pottery Pots never disappoints with its new introductions of urban-influenced pieces. This year, the bamboo collection in eight sizes was a hit, with a bamboo finish outside and a fiberglass cement coating inside to strengthen it. You can see five of the sizes here and there are three more larger pots, as well. These are new for 2020 and will be in stock in November. www.potterypots.nl

Organic Mechanics



You will see a new sticker on some of Organic Mechanics' products—that's from the Rodale Institute, according to founder Mark Highland. The institute is partnering with about 20 companies that are organic to label Rodale Institute Approved products. Organic Mechanics was selected as one of the partner companies, and the stickers will go on the Premium Blend Potting Soil and the Planting Mix Compost Blend. The Rodale Institute is still naming partner companies, but so far others include Highwire Coffee Roasters, Greensome Farms and Domaine Bousquet Wines, and Organic Mechanics has received some nice publicity based on media reports on the new initiative. www.organicmechanicsoil.com GP

Put it on the Calendar

Next year's IGC Show will be August 11-13 at its permanent home at McCormick Place Lakeside Center.