

greenPROFIT

Features

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Stuff We Love

Green Profit Staff



Chris Beytes:

I love when other industries see value in our stuff

When I shop, or visit trade shows, or even walk through airports, I'm on the lookout for companies that use our products to enhance or sell their products.

Currently, it's tropical plants. Here are examples I saw at this year's International Home + Housewares Show. Plenty of monstera on tableware, for instance, which is nice to see. But most interesting was the giant monstera backdrop

for a fabric care company called Gleener. What does Gleener make? Lint brushes. What does a monstera have to do with lint? Nothing. The marketing manager who designed the booth simply liked the way it looked.

I love small details that take a plant from boring to boutique

The European plant industry does something very well: taking a raw ingredient—a plant—and adding just the right enhancements to turn it into something special. Not that we don't do that here in North America, but it's less common and rarely as stylish.

Here are two examples I spotted at IPM Essen last January: This rooted schefflera cutting is probably worth 50 cents. But put it in a fancy bottle, give it a nice label, smart name and attractive cardboard carton and you've got a \$12 to \$15 retail value. Or this hellebore, turned into a beautiful holiday gift with the addition of a stylish terra cotta pot and saucer, ribbon, interesting looped twine decoration, a bit of rustic wood and some moss. You won't find this in a box store ... and if you do, kudos to that box store!

I love Christmas mouse poinsettia

Breeder Selecta One will launch this new red poinsettia in 2020. Named for its rounded bracts, Christmas Mouse will be excellent for smaller pots. What I love most is the cute artwork they used at its European launch. And good news! I have word from Selecta One that they will offer POP in North America featuring the fuzzy little character.



Ellen C. Wells:

Rockin' Resurrected

You'd think I would have learned to keep the weed whacker away from my sample plants after I accidentally chewed up my Rockin' Blue Suede Shoes Salvia from Proven Winners. It must have been just a nub emerging from the ground after I got done with it, but it only took a month or so for this 2019 intro to spring back to life. And it put on some amazing growth, too—enough growth for me to accidentally whack it away a second time. Look at it now! This variety is aptly named, as it's still rockin' these beautiful blooms deep into October. Imagine what it would have done

had I given it the chance to grow freely this summer!

PSA: Check Yourself

Friends, I'm not kidding when I say I love what the drug doxycycline can do. A month-long dose of it earlier this fall cured me of the mysterious aches, pains and fatigue of Lyme disease. While the symptoms took nearly two months to diagnose, the meds took effect within hours. My point here? With the “shoulder seasons” lasting longer, ticks are more active through the year than before. Check yourself—and your pets!—each and every time you’ve been out in the garden, field and woods. Lyme disease is no joke!

The Fluffy Winter Garden

Summer is great and all, but I do love me some cold weather. Let me specify that, actually: I love what cold weather does to ornamental grasses, making them look puffy and fluffy. It reminds me of what heat does to popcorn kernels—enough heat over time and they pop! It's the same with grass heads, but with cold. All the ornamental grasses in the neighborhood seemed to have floofed out all at once after the season's first extreme dip in temperatures. I almost don't want to cut them down for the winter.



Jen Polanz:

It's Another Tequila Sunrise

Whether it evokes the taste of a drink or brings the famous Eagles song to mind, Venti Tequila Sunrise Dahlia from Selecta is downright gorgeous with its ombre-like double blooms, creating that classic yellow, orange, red color combination. The blooms, which are about the size of your palm, are prolific and long-lasting. You all know me and my plants—if it's not tough, it doesn't make it past the end of June with me. This one even lasted through a week-

long, bone-dry, late July vacation where no one watered (hey, the neighbor kept the cat well fed, that's all we could ask of her). This dahlia has sturdy stems, too, making it great for cut flower arrangements.

A Shout Out to My Local Farmers

I went back to my local CSA (that's Community Supported Agriculture) this year and I feel good about it. Mine is a consortium of four family farms in a nearby county that provide a 20-week summer program and a six-week winter program. We pick up our share (a small, customized share so I can pick what I want each week) at a local church and it's filled with locally grown, organic goodies. It's how I discovered kohlrabi and a few other lesser-known veggies (I still don't know what to do with ground cherries—anyone?). And the tomatoes ... oh, the tomatoes. They're delicious.

If you haven't considered acting as a pickup site for a CSA (or even being a CSA provider if you grow your own veggies), take a look around you. There might be an opportunity to partner, driving steady traffic in your offseason for multiple weeks straight. It ties in well with wellness, eating healthy, supporting local agriculture and local businesses in general. The people who support CSAs are a tight-knit group who tend to exude loyalty, too. They come back year after year to support their favorite farmers (and the hosts who are pick-up sites)!

Free Samples—Yum!

At the United Fresh Show in Chicago, SUNSET provided samples of its new pasta and tomato mixes for grocery stores. As garden centers begin to carry more produce and/or fruit and veggie starts, tastings like these can help customers happily make their final selections and show them how to prepare dishes with them.



Bill Calkins:

As a parent, there are very few things that make me happier than going to a garden center, farm or nursery with my wife and kids. Our girls are 9 and 11 and still young enough to have absolutely no say in the family outing, but old enough to act visibly bored when the chosen activity doesn't get their heart rates above about 150 ... this inspired

me to share three things I love.

Fall Activities

Putting out autumn decorations and going on local excursions to enjoy the season are always annual highlights for my family. Garden centers and farms that go above and beyond to create memorable experiences not only inspire us to bond as a family, but also fill our cart with seasonal merchandise. Add in some fresh food (read: apple cider donuts for dad) and photo ops, and it's guaranteed kids and parents will be smiling. An added bonus: I'll make a special trip back there next spring to stock the garden.

Dirty Hands

Garden centers and nurseries with hands-on planting areas and short classes get kids excited about helping in the garden. These activities are the perfect antidote to screen time, and even worse, the two words, "I'm bored." When kids are empowered to play in the dirt, they develop a lifelong passion. Starting seeds indoors kicks off the spring and rewards come in the form of a bowl of fresh cherry tomatoes on the counter for after-school snacking.

Nature at School

Maybe I'm extra passionate about this one because my wife is a middle school science teacher, but I know for a fact kids love any lesson that involves planting things and watching them grow. They also love bugs and habitats. The best lessons in class are experienced, so whether students plant seeds and track the growth, collect tadpoles for aquatic ecosystems or simply visit a school garden to see what's growing on a weekly basis, education happens. Does your business partner with local schools and offer seeds, trowels, soil or containers? I bet you have some extra supplies around that would really help teachers promote nature to kids of all ages. And if you're inspired to dig into this opportunity, check out www.kidsgardening.org for some amazing resources.



Jen Zurko:

You can find plants in the weirdest places ...

Living with a 10-year-old who's OBSESSED with Harry Potter highly influenced the decision on where our next family vacation would be. Hence, why we spent four days at Universal Studios in Orlando this past October. I admit it—I love Harry Potter, too, so to be honest, I was just as excited as my daughter Olivia to visit the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry, Diagon Alley and Hogsmeade.

The details for every Harry Potter-themed attraction were jaw-dropping. The scenery truly captured what was described in the books and shown in the movies—which isn't surprising. From everything I've read, author J.K. Rowling was involved in every part of the planning as the Wizarding World of Harry Potter was developed, even down to sampling and approving all of the food served at the restaurants and snack bars, including the candy sold in Honeydukes (no wonder a Chocolate Frog is \$12!).

So every aspect was painstakingly intricate and complex, making you feel like you'd actually run into Harry, Ron and Hermione, even as you stood in line for an hour and a half. Which was the whole point—if you're going to spend most of your time "in the queue," as the English say, then it has to capture your attention and keep you entertained.

When you first enter Hogwarts Castle to ride Harry Potter & The Forbidden Journey, you snake around railings in a replica of an actual greenhouse with plants and everything. Some were real—there were crotons, hostas and huge monsteras in raised concrete beds and along the walls.

And then there were "fake" plants that added to the charm of what you'd actually see if you were a second year

taking Professor Sprout's Herbology class, like the pots hanging from chains and large vines coiled around the beams of the roof (Photo 1), and pots of Mandrakes on a bench (Photo 2). **GP**

Pictured above, left: Olivia Zurko, student in House Hufflepuff, waiting for the train to Hogwarts at Platform 9¾ in King's Cross Station.