

An Eventful Event

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If you skipped Short Course this year because you thought it would be the same old, same old, you missed out. But fear not! The editors at *GrowerTalks* and *Green Profit* split up to fulfill the trade show duties of finding the newest, most innovative products and get the buzz from the floor—which had a very pleasant (if a little humid) atmosphere. The exhibitors we visited with on Sunday (the first day) grumbled a bit about it being a little slow, but then Monday came and there were traffic jams in many aisles.

According to OFA's CEO Michael Geary, this year's attendance was the largest number since 2008 with more than 9,100 people. "We believe this reflects an increasing confidence in the U.S. and global economy and a continued trust in the association and this event as the preferred provider for education and international market development," Michael said via email.

And speaking of the "association," there were some changes with regard to OFA and the American Landscape & Nursery Association announced during Short Course. OFA and ANLA are formally exploring the creation of a NEW trade association that will bring more value to both memberships and the industry as a whole, combining the best of the best that they do—business education and government relations. The boards of both organizations hope to have this new association in place by July 2013, and by no later than January 2014. This new association will replace both ANLA and OFA. (Read more details about the announcement and the new Next Level event on page 19.)

Both sides have stressed the new organization will continue to support all levels of the supply chain with new events and educational conferences that cater to growers and retailers. Managing editor-at-large Jen Polanz spoke with OFA president Mike McCabe and he said garden centers would be a major focus of the new association. He continued to say they want to be known as THE retail organization and consider retail the number one priority in membership growth.

We also have new Young Grower and Young Retailer winners! Matt Altman from Altman Plants in Vista, California, is our 2012 Young Grower, and Tiger Palafox from Missions Hills Nursery in San Diego, California, is the 2012 Young Retailer. Both were given their awards at the Unplugged event Monday night. (Read about Matt on page 42, then flip over and read about Tiger on page 24 of *Green Profit*.)

A lot can happen in a year, so Short Course in 2013 should be interesting. Plan on being there—you never know what you might miss.



Left: Andrew Lee (Gloeckner), Marieke Lenssen (Philips), Joe Simone (Gloeckner) and Erik Jansen (Philips) celebrate the new partnership. Center: Burpee food truck. Right: Chris Beytes and Ball IGC business manager Bill Calkins confirm their "bromance" by sharing a shot of healthy veggie juice together.

Philips/Gloeckner Partnership

Lighting giant Philips has been moving heavily into the world of horticultural LEDs in recent years; we've been on several Dutch trips to see their technology in action. To help expand the use of their LEDs in the United States and Latin America they announced a partnership with New York-based horticulture distributor Fred C. Gloeckner & Co.

Why Gloeckner? Because they're known to carry a wide range of greenhouse supplies and hardgoods, as well as relationships with growers and academics who can help develop LED light "recipes" for various crops and greenhouse scenarios, helping to "move LED technologies from the test environment to a new level of commercial production," as they stated in the release announcing the partnership.

Burpee Home Gardens Hits the Road

One of the first things on the trade media's agenda was a stop at Ball Horticultural Company's booth for a sneak peek at Burpee Home Gardens' newest marketing efforts to promote gardening and healthy eating. Beginning in March 2013, the new Burpee food truck will embark on the "Grow Anywhere Tour" where it'll visit 25 cities to give away 40,000 pounds of fresh vegetables and 13,000 plants. Diane Hund, director of marketing for

Burpee Home Gardens, said they will partner with local growers and garden centers at many of the tour stops. There will also be a Facebook page where you can follow the Burpee Food Truck during its journey. The “Grow Anywhere Tour” will officially begin with a brief appearance at the Philadelphia Flower Show in March and heads south to Charlotte, North Carolina.

To celebrate, the Burpee Home Gardens team was offering “shots” of organic and lycopene-charged veggie drink mixes.

BASF's two new chemicals

For its fifth year in the horticulture market, BASF is launching two new products. First is Pylon TR (Total Release). It's the first time BASF has put its own active ingredient in the total release aerosol format acquired from Whitmore a while back. This insecticide/miticide total release is great for small and medium-sized growers, those who are short staffed and for Quonset houses. It controls mites, thrips and adult fungus gnats. (Watch for Pageant and Trinity fungicides in a TR form, too, as well as for a pyrethrum product registered for truck use!)

Second is Orvego fungicide, the “next generation” of downy mildew and Phytophthora control. It features two active ingredients, dimethomorph (the same A.I. as in Stature) and a new chemical, ametoctradin, a whole new chemical class. This soluble concentrate offers instant control of spores and good residual control. They say it looks “spectacular” on impatiens downy mildew. It's labeled for greenhouse and nursery; landscape registration is expected in six months.



Heavenly Profits (And Taste) *above left*

Here's the pitch: You have the potential to make between 62 and 75% gross profit on product displayed in a 6-ft. case. The bonus? It's delicious (Jen P. taste-tested, just to provide an accurate report). Calico Cottage has a turnkey system for manufacturing, merchandising and selling fudge branded with the garden center's logo. It's an interesting concept for garden retail, especially as more garden centers are becoming involved in “agri-tainment” opportunities with fall festivals, late summer promotions and expanded holiday offerings. The fudge can be reconstituted (as in, if it doesn't sell, mix it back together and make new fudge) so there's little waste, and it's nonperishable (the base fudge also is gluten free and kosher). Your operation typically requires a health department certificate to sell it, but according to sales manager Jeri Stewart, having a fudge program can lengthen the amount of time customers stay and shop. She says most garden centers choose to manufacture the fudge on-site, but there's an option to have it shipped in labeled with the garden center's logo, too. Retailers who are currently working with Calico Cottage include McCabe's Greenhouses and Danville Gardens.

The EZ Potter from Ellis *above center*

Right across the aisle from the Ball Publishing booth was a brand new potting machine from Mitchell Ellis Products. Mitchell's son Sean was the designer of the EZ Potter, which is the first on the market (patent pending) that doesn't require mechanical linkage. What makes it different from others on the market is that the EZ Potter has a conveyor belt instead of a pot track, so it saves on set-up time and maintenance. A sensor detects the pot size—from 1 to 7 gal.—and activates the drill. The drill can be centered and the depth can be adjusted with the push of a button instead of using a wrench.

Also, most potting machines use a scraper that adjusts above the pot after filling. The EZ Potter uses a rotary sweep that adjusts to the grower's needs. It's quiet and low maintenance—even those not as mechanically inclined can operate it.

Total Energy Group offers De Gier Drives *above right*

Looking for motors and drive mechanisms for vents, curtains or open-roof greenhouses? Total Energy Group is now offering the full line of motors, gearboxes and rack and pinions from Dutch company De Gier. The two companies signed the official agreement in the Total Energy Group stand at OFA.

De Gier's motors have been thoughtfully adapted to the U.S. and Canadian markets, including UL and CSA listings, dual voltage motors and flexible mounting points that are interchangeable with other popular motors and drives. Twin limit switches, all steel construction and competitive prices are more reasons to consider these Dutch-made components. Pictured are Peter Stuyt of Total Energy Group and Rob Sandberg of De Gier.



New FertiCart From Dramm Gives Growers More Options *above left*

Dramm showcased its new FC3X7 FertiCart at OFA, which features three separate 7-gal. tanks for different stock solutions on one fertilizer injector cart. The cart works with Dosatron's D14 Injector and comes with all the plumbing needed to use the injector and meet Dosatron's warranty requirements. Each tank has an isolation valve so growers can quickly switch fertilizer solutions, and each has a drain valve for easy cleanup.

Berries With Flair *above center*

Last year Ellen Wells gave us the inside scoop on the Brazel Berries program from Fall Creek Farm & Nursery in Oregon. This year, they were a big hit at Short Course with examples of the first three branded ornamental berry shrubs designed to look trendy (and yet produce delicious fruit) in the landscape and in containers. The three on display at Short Course were: Raspberry Shortcake, Jelly Bean (a hardy dwarf puffball blueberry) and Peach Sorbet (a compact blueberry with peachy spring foliage). The marketing program includes signage, branded pots, tags and a dedicated website. Kate Terrell, purchasing manager at Wallace's Garden Center in Bettendorf, Iowa, was excited about the program and said it was one of the big highlights of the show for her.

Easy-Carry Mandevilla from Suntory *above right*

At this year's Spring Trials, Suntory introduced the new Garden Crimson variety to their Sun Parasol Mandevilla collection. We also saw their new bright red pots that include growing information. Now, Suntory is ensuring that consumers buy more than one with this easy 3-pack handle. Available from John Henry, this pot carrier features the same growing information as on the pot, so no plant tags are needed. Delilah Onofrey said that they were starting with about 1,000 of them to gauge interest. Right now, the carry handle is only for Garden Crimson, but if demand increases, Suntory may consider them for the other Sun Parasol varieties.



AgriNomix Grow-n-Go Racks, Production Counter System *above left*

Two new products from Oberlin, Ohio's AgriNomix. First is Grow-n-Go Racks, designed primarily for plugs and young plants grown on the ground. Each rack holds 10 to 12 trays just off the floor, allowing for drainage and airflow. The racks can be easily stacked by hand onto a wheeled base, essentially turning them from a bench into a transport cart.

AgriNomix's Production Counter System takes the idea of a scoreboard above a transplant line into the digital age, with data fields including product type, amount produced, number per hour, deviation from standard or expected output and more. Plus real-time counting of each worker's output. You can export the data for analysis and storage.

Hang It Up *above center*

File this under hip and trendy, yet super functional. The Picture Garden from T.O. Plastics in Clearwater, Minnesota, started out as an idea from Randy Tagawa. He brought his concept to T.O. Plastics, who tweaked the design and manufactured a vertical garden display that can hang alone or hook together in a grouping. It uses 80% less water than traditional window boxes and hanging baskets, making it a great product for low-maintenance gardeners (think younger generation!). It's UV protected, so it can hang indoors or out. Another nice feature is if you group them, there are drill holes in the bottom that allow water to irrigate through the containers below, so you only have to pour water in the top. And for even more low maintenance, you can just pop a plant still in its container in the holes—no need to "plant it up." For retailers, the Picture Garden comes 18 units per POP display.

OHP's Disc Tablets *above right*

It's the most interesting form of pesticide we've seen in a long time: Disc Tablets, by OHP, put the active ingredient imidacloprid (as found in Marathon) into a ball-shaped "tablet" along with a small starter charge of Bayer 12-9-4 fertilizer. One tablet can last for 12 to 24 months, depending on the crop. Great for long-term container crops, including those that are hard to reach for standard sprays, such as hanging baskets. Packed 1,200 per container, you use 1 tablet per gal. pot or 2-3 tablets per 3 gal.



B&L Maxi Pro Filler *above left*

What's new in flat and pot fillers from Bouldin & Lawson is user-friendly adjustments and easy access. That's what you get with the new Maxi Pro Filler. Designed to accommodate any container up to 18 in. wide and 16 in. tall, the Maxi Pro features a swing-out rotary brush mechanism that

allows easy access to the back of the machine for cleanup. Adjustments are simple, too. Conveyor and soil feed both have variable speed controls, plus a master speed control that allows you to keep the relative speeds between the two components while speeding up or slowing down the entire machine. Soil hopper holds 1 ¼ yards. List price is \$21,900.

Solar Panels from TrueLeaf *above center*

For an affordable way to save energy, TrueLeaf Technologies is introducing the TrueSolar grower-installed PV panels. Not only does it allow growers to qualify for tax credits and local/state/federal incentives, but it's the largest panel on the market—generating 420 W from just one panel. Made by Helios Solar Works, a Milwaukee-based company.

Flowers To Go *above right*

A-ROO wins the award (from Jen P.) for a new product that's long past its due—the Ariel Airy petal pouch floral gift bag. (It's really taken this long to put big, easy-to-hold handles on the floral plant bags?) Nevertheless, bravo to A-ROO for doing it in such a lovely way. The bag has a sealed bottom, easy-to-view and scan lower "clear zone" for the product's bar code, and is available in yellow, purple, pink, orange and green.

Flex+ from Pöppelmann *above left*

The constant complaint about printing on Thermoform pots is the low quality of the images. Pöppelmann's new Flex+ technology allows for high-resolution printing on all colors of plant containers—including on black pots, which could never be done before. And it's so new that there are only five machines in the world that print this type of quality on plant containers. The cost is slightly higher than offset printing, but you get the choice of shiny or matte finishes, unlimited colors and it can be used on a variety of sizes, like tapered or conical pots, with minimum blurring. Jack Shelton from Pöppelmann said Flex+ is able to offer lower volumes for smaller growers and makes it easy to have repeat runs for the same designs.

A Display of Flexibility *above center*

In a world of somewhat limited options when it comes to plant display systems, OutFront Portable Solutions offers its economical Power Point Cart System. Suitable for indoor or outdoor sales, one of its cooler features is two removable, two-tier, clip-on end caps. Another nice feature is the wheels, which are on the main body of the cart and not the removable end caps. It's constructed with hot-dipped galvanized steel. The main benches are 24-in. deep and more options include a flower pail holder, clip-on sign holder and a pair of clip-on sign bars that also can hold hanging baskets.

rEarth from McConkey *above right*

Last year at Spring Trials, we saw the beginnings of McConkey's rEarth program of using recycled water bottles to make 6-packs. Now, they've figured out a way to use these recycled materials to make a multitude of container and tray sizes. Jeff Gross from McConkey said that water bottles are now being made to have heat-thermal properties, so it enables them to make stronger and stiffer pots and trays than Styrene, so they don't rip easily.

Oh, and did we mention it's an Earth-friendly program? Most recycling facilities don't use the dark plastic materials after the water bottles go through the process, so Jeff said McConkey takes this "waste" off of the recyclers' hands. They don't use oil and the consumer can recycle their discarded pots and trays at curbside instead of having to bring them back to the garden center. Printing capabilities aren't available quite yet, said Jeff, but he said they're working on it.

Gardening Freedom

This was probably the coolest product Jen P. saw at Short Course, and it made her sad there wasn't a display there to photograph. The Freedom Greenhouse from Maine Garden Products (owned by Pike Bartlett, who also is president of Barlett Bench & Wire) is the first of its kind: a self-contained, self-tending hobby greenhouse. So far, the most popular seller is the 8-ft. by 8-ft. model. Pike started developing the prototype four years ago, but he's particular about who becomes a dealer because he won't allow one to be sold without a professional installer on board. All his dealers, currently just five of them, do the ground prep before installation.

"People want their greenhouses but they don't want to stay home," Pike cites as his inspiration for creating Freedom, which has unique ventilation designs that can be manually opened or automatically controlled with a high-quality commercial greenhouse thermostat that runs off a battery charged by solar panels. Freedom also can be equipped with auto-timed watering benches. A gardener could leave every weekend and still return to beautiful plants, he adds. GT

Left: Fairy Flowers program and Little Cuties heuchera. Center: A sure sign competitors can get along in this industry, Jim "Chip" Moylan, winner of this year's Garden Center Live! Merchandising Contest, smiles for the camera with runner-up Ellen Barredo. Right: "The Bag Lady," one of several inspiring displays created by Joe Baer in the Retail Trend Spot.

Retail Fairy Tale

by Jennifer Polanz

Fairy gardening was a major product line for several vendors at Short Course this year, with houses, plants and accessories visible at multiple booths. One of the big highlights was the expansion of a fun, fresh branded Fairy Flowers program from Fairy Gardening Kits creators Jeff and Emily Sorenson featuring 33 different varieties of upright trees, "shrubs," groundcovers and vines. The Sorenson's company, Fairy Gardening Inc., formed an exclusive partnership with the Henry F. Michell Co. to sell pre-finished plants nationwide with Gulley Greenhouses of Fort Collins, Colorado, shipping plug trays and branded tags.

There was lots of interest in the program at the show, according to Carrie Waldron, who works for Gulley Greenhouses. "It's been pretty exciting because they can finish them pretty easily," Carrie said. The program ships nationwide and includes tags and plugs—it's up to the grower-retailer or finished grower whether or not they want to finish in 2.5-in. or 3-in. pots. They buy the program in flats of 25, 98 or 200. The Fairy Flowers program, which Jeff and Emily started selling two years ago to garden centers and boutique shops, is a complement to the kits they created featuring furniture, potting soil and other accessories.

Meanwhile, Braun Horticulture unveiled its new line of fairy houses and other necessities (even fairies need outhouses!) for holiday 2012 and spring 2013. They're made with great care to detail in the United States and Canada, and the wholesale prices range from \$20 to \$200 for larger pieces.

And this last item may or may not fit with fairies, but they're mini and cute, so we're going to roll with it. Terra Nova announced at the show its line of Little Cuties heuchera, which are the smallest in the world. A series of seven, the Little Cuties are great for a compact border, mixed containers and, yes, fairy gardens (though probably larger fairy gardens).

Retailer Roundup

by Ellen C. Wells

Garden Center Live! offered retailer attendees lots of ideas, expert interactions and a good dose of competition.

The OFA Short Course isn't all transplanting machines and the latest in pest controls. There were plenty of educational sessions, demonstrations and hands-on workshops to benefit the garden center owners and staff who made the trip to Columbus, Ohio, this year. These retailer-focused sessions are offered under the Garden Center Live! umbrella.

Display Battle A perennial highlight of the Garden Center Live! program is the Merchandising Contest, now in its fourth year. This "Iron Chef"-like competition consists of two rounds, each pitting two contestants against each other for the honor of competing in the finals. Given a limited amount of fixtures, hardgoods, plants and materials to work with, the contestants had to create displays that not only communicated the round's theme, but had to be attractive and shoppable, as well.

This year's contestants were Kara McElroy from Petals & Leaves in Powell, Ohio; Ellen Barredo from Bowood Farms Nursery in St. Louis, Missouri; Nikki Martin from White Oak Gardens in Cincinnati, Ohio; and Jim "Chip" Moylan from Ray Wiegand's Nursery in Macomb Township, Michigan. This year's Merchandising Contest winner is Chip, who, according to the judges, narrowly beat out Ellen to take home the title. Chip also receives an All-Access Pass to the 2013 OFA Short Course and a display of Dramm watering products.

Each round drew a sizeable crowd of cheerleaders and onlookers, many asking how to be involved next year. Look for changes in the contest next year that may incorporate more contestants and new twists in the game.

Retail Inspiration Attendees had the opportunity to get in on the display creation themselves, through the many workshops that took place in the Garden Center Live! area. Sunday's two workshops, "Merchandising for Profit" and "Merchandising on a Budget," were led by Ian Baldwin and Carmen Johnston, respectively, both of whom brought business and design know-how to the sessions. The displays remained for the show's duration to inspire passers by.

Also inspiring were the many retail displays located in the Retail Trend Spot. Created by merchandising expert Joe Baer of ZenGenius, each display focused on a theme such as food, vegetables, eco-friendly and the like. The Marketing Lab, located in the same ballroom, was also home to other informational areas and horticulture marketing experts. GT