

### IGC Show Recap: Product Extravaganza

| Jennifer Polanz

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This year's IGC Show proved to be one of the largest and most well-attended since the show began in 2007, with 6,700 retailers walking the aisles viewing the 1,000 booths.

The mood in the aisles was optimistic, though still cautious. The general consensus was spring rocked, and then June took a nosedive. To that end, the Ball Publishing team of Chris Beytes, Jen Zurko and myself, scoured the trade show floor for new products to reinvigorate garden retail and to help extend the season. We saw a few trends continuing strong, like edibles (with a lean toward smaller spaces, patios and containers) and organic/all-natural products. Here's a rundown of what we found.

#### Espoma: Lawn Care Won't Be The Same



That's the promise Espoma made while unveiling its new organic lawn care line for 2013 via a video shown before one of the keynote addresses—a video that parodied Apple's famous "1984" commercial featuring the large synthetic lawn care companies as "Big Brother." The idea is independent retailers have either conceded the lawn care market to the box stores or settled for thinner margins. The folks at Espoma say their new program can make retailers double the margin of synthetics, and appeal to generations of homeowners who are reducing their chemical use.

Espoma's new line includes four seasonal applications (Early Spring, Late Spring, Summer and Fall) and includes formulations recommended by new university research of significantly reduced amounts of nitrogen. The program includes a series of six dealer training videos and pull-through educational material to consumers to help retailers break through the knowledge barrier on organic lawn care.

#### Scheurich: Conquering The Outdoor Market



The German pottery company Scheurich changed the retail market for indoor pottery with its sleek, colorful pots and trendy merchandising displays. The company just announced in August it purchased a German plastics manufacturer called P.P. Plastics and has created a new line of outdoor pottery, as well. This way, retailers can have those sleek, contemporary styles in lightweight plastic pots that don't look plastic at all. In fact, I had trouble telling which pots were ceramic and which were plastic at the Scheurich booth. Keith Turbett of Scheurich promises, too, that the outdoor program will have the same trendy merchandising concepts to help retailers sell more containers.



#### Garden In The Koop: For The Kids

We're going to have lots more kids' stuff in the November issue of Green Profit, but here's a little taste. This company has several kid-centric items, but one of my favorites was The Giggling Garden. It features heirloom seeds in a biodegradable egg carton with names like Red Dragon Carrot, Dinosaur Kale and Rattlesnake Pole Beans. They're real varieties, may get some kids to eat their vegetables and help children to understand where their food comes from. This company also had a great worm composter product called a "Worm Hotel" for children that was decorative yet functional.

#### Planto: Sell It, Don't Smell It

A new line of skin care from Planto called Gardener's Day isn't your average "beauty" line. I'm not a big fan of smelly lotions, to be honest. This line has no fragrance, artificial colors or other mineral oil products, which means it's not greasy, either. The packaging is simple, yet effective (not frilly). So this could be a great gift line for men or women, or just a great everyday use for serious gardeners.

#### Urban Apples: Patio-Friendly Fruit

Greenleaf Nursery has taken urban "farming" to the next level with the Urban Columnar Apple series, which grow so narrow consumers could keep them on their patio in a pot. The trees mature to 8 to 10 ft. tall, but only 2 ft. in diameter, making them great for small spaces. The four varieties are: Tasty Red, Blushing Delight, Golden Treat and Tangy Green.

### **Sustâne: Coming On Strong**

This company is an all-organic, OMRI-listed fertilizer manufacturer. For 25 years, it's provided professional-grade products for nursery, greenhouse and turf in 60 countries. At the IGC Show it unveiled its new line of organic products for the home gardener, which will be distributed in the U.S. through a new partnership with Organic Mechanics.

The one that really caught my eye was the Compost Tea Bags, which simply look like a tea bag in a paper filter pack. Consumers can create their own compost brew overnight and water with it in the morning. It's a simple, easy product and I could see it being a lucrative impulse buy at the register. This product, along with a line of lawn and landscape fertilizer and plant food products, will be available to independent retailers and select Whole Foods stores for 2013.

Organic Mechanics also announced at the show they have introduced a new 8-qt. size to the popular 16-qt. Seed Starting Blend that was introduced in 2012. A 5-lb. size for the Worm Castings product will be new for 2013, along with a 2-cu. ft. All-Natural Organic Hardwood Bark Mulch.



### **Gardner Pie Co.: Bringing In Fall & Winter Crowds**

We talked about extending the season at the beginning. One option for attracting offseason crowds is food. Who doesn't like food, right? Gardner Pie Co. specializes in shipping frozen pies to retailers to either bake at home or bake in the store and sell to consumers. It offers 85 different kinds of pie, and can provide interested retailers with an estimate for start-up costs and return on investment. According to a handout from the show, a retailer can recoup the initial investment in one year. One note of interest, though: check on zoning and health department requirements before you get started.



### **Of Nature Jewelry & Sculpture: The Art of Nature**

This company really caught my eye because garden-related jewelry can be a great addition to retailers looking for tie-ins to their core business. So it's for those not looking to get into the jewelry business per se, but still looking for high-margin tie-ins. This artist dips real flower petals and leaves in copper, then applies patinas to get different finishes. All the pieces are hand-crafted by artist Sandy James in Fox River Grove, Illinois. **GP**