

OFA Short Course

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Aisles of Smiles

The rains of spring seemed a distant memory as the industry began shopping for the 2011 season at the annual OFA Short Course

Sticking with our weather theme, it's easy to use the annual summer OFA Short Course as a barometer of the industry. You can tell a lot about how spring went by the mood of the attendees and exhibitors ... or can you? This spring rated about a five or six by most accounts, thanks to a strong start that was ruined by a hot, wet finish. And yet the mood in the aisles at July's Short Course was decidedly upbeat and optimistic. Attendees we spoke with chalked it up to thinking long-term. To paraphrase one grower, "Sure, spring wasn't great. But it could have been worse. We still need to plan for fall, and next season. If you don't invest, you fall behind."

Investment seemed to be on many minds. Exhibitors promoting energy and labor efficiency reported considerable interest in their products. However, they weren't yet sure if growers would pull the trigger on contracts. Said one exhibitor, of the conservative nature of growers, "They've got a little money in their pockets from spring, but they may want to hold on to it, seeing how uncertain the economy still is."

Another barometric reading from Short Course: Increased interest in retail. More and more growers are focusing on retail, whether they're already retail growers, are considering starting a retail location, or they're interested in better serving their IGC or chain store customers. Mirroring that trend, OFA is making a concerted effort to attract more retailers to the show by providing more retail content. Two features were designed specifically for retailers: the second annual Merchandising Contest; and the Garden Center Live! Interactive retail display area, designed and hosted by four retail magazines, including *Green Profit* (read about both events below).

Finally, what about attendance? Well, it was up from last year, organizers say, with some 9,000 total industry folks registered, representing 32 countries. However, that's down from previous highs of more than 10,000. Why? Simple: the industry isn't as big as it used to be. Consolidation and the loss of businesses through retirement and land sales. There just aren't as many of us as there used to be.

But those of you still growing and retailing are doing a better job than ever, and you're probably better business people than your predecessors, too. That's why, despite the challenges of the market, the economy and a changing society, you're still positive about the future. In fact, more than a few attendees speculated that the reason the mood on the trade show floor was so upbeat was because the gloom-and-doomers all stayed home.

That said, here's a sampling of the products, ideas and trends from the 2010 OFA Short Course. Oh, if you're planning for next summer, mark your calendars for July 9-12, in Columbus, Ohio.

What's New?

One Way Display The One Way Display is a new product from first-time OFA exhibitor Technopos Inc. of Quebec, Canada. This recycled cardboard shipping and display unit is designed for one-way plant shipments. Made of sturdy recycled paperboard that's held in place with plastic strapping, each shelf can hold up to 200 lbs. of bedding or pot plants. There's also a cut flower version available. Techno POS can custom print the uprights, shelves and headers with slogans or POP of your choice. The One Way Display comes in full-size or half pallet sizes. Retailers can easily break down the rack



The One Way Display is easy to put together and can hold up to 200 lbs. per shelf. They'll print them to your specifications.

for recycling after use. Cost is about \$40—price-competitive with EZ Shipper racks. Technopos previously has developed in-store displays for the cosmetics and pharmaceuticals industries. They've been testing the One Way Display in a few select Walmart and Sam's Club stores. www.onewaydisplay.com

Netherland Bulb Co.

Touted as "the world's largest colocasia," *Colocasia gigantea* Thailand strain is a monstrosity of a tropical that grows up to 10-ft. tall, with leaves measuring 6 ft. across. It wouldn't have been believable if there weren't a picture of Jeroen Menkveld's wife standing next to one.



If bigger is better, this colocasia is really something.

This *Colocasia gigantea* is derived from a Thailand strain and is grown into plugs from seeds the size of a pinhead. It's a heavy feeder, but Jeroen said it'll grow like crazy if you keep on fertilizing it. Also, the bigger the pot, the bigger the plant. www.netherlandbulb.com

In between meeting with people, attending sessions and trying to spend some time in our own booth, we dedicated a few hours each day to wandering down all (and yes, we mean ALL) of the aisles on the trade show floor. Here are a few noteworthy products and programs we saw while maneuvering through the eager attendees.



Dramm Dramm's booth was buzzing with visitors getting glimpses of their new watering and spray tools, the first of which is the new BP-4 Battery Powered Back Pack Sprayer. Kurt Becker told us it's lightweight and easy to use for applying PGRs, insecticides, fungicides and other greenhouse and nursery chemicals.

Kurt also showed us their new ozone water management system, which collects water runoff from the greenhouse and cleans it so it can be reused. Using green food coloring, he demonstrated how the ozone uses an organic process that filters the water by adding more oxygen. www.dramm.com

Dramm's BP-4 Back Pack Sprayer allows growers to apply PGRs and other greenhouse chemicals quickly and easily.

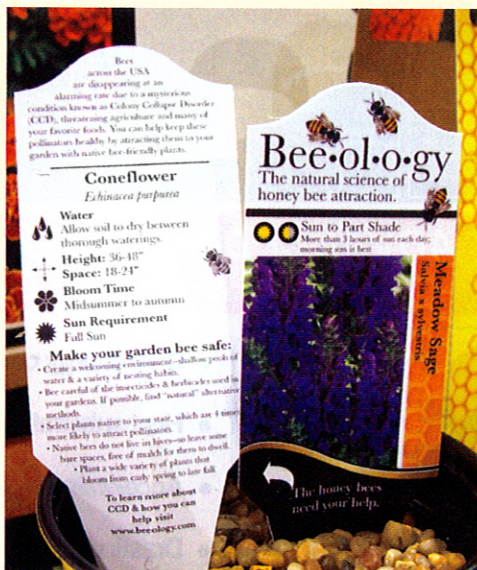
Casa Flora Richard Lim, president of Casa Flora, was pleased to show off his new "extra-hardy" fern, Astral Gem. Richard says it's so tough that it withstands the trials of both pets and kids. And the rugged, shiny, dark-green finely cut foliage doesn't spore, so it won't make a mess on tables and furniture. Also, Richard is partnering with Edmundo Ortega, a Maryland designer who creates living walls with built-in irrigation systems from ferns and heucheras, to provide them to Casa Flora customers. Richards says that usually green walls tend to be very expensive, but not so with Edmundo's creations, who has developed living displays for the Baltimore Conservatory and office buildings in Maryland. www.casaflora.com



The new "extra-hardy" Astral Gem fern from Casa Flora withstands the stress of living with kids or pets ... or both!



Casa Flora is now offering living walls with ferns and heucheras designed by Edmundo Ortega.



Plant tags from MasterTag's Beeology program inform the consumer about how they can help the honeybee.

MasterTag With the plight of honeybees making headlines, MasterTag has developed a program specifically to support our pollinating pals. Beeology allows growers and retailers to easily create a program of plants that attract honeybees. In-store signage and tags inform the consumer about how they can help honeybees thrive ... MasterTag even offers honey made from their own hives. A sweet deal! www.mastertag.com

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A-ROO The booth alone was reason enough to go in and check out their new packaging products. (See page 52 for more about their display.) A-ROO's Dennis DeBaltzo walked us through a few new innovations for the floral industry, including the Petal Pouch Gift Bag that features different decorative patterns, making a plant an instant, wrapped gift. They also have a large Petal Pouch for flats and trays. For the consumer who wants more than one plant, the Gift Tote is made with a thicker plastic to help carrying multiple plants easier. There is also a slimmer version for orchids. www.a-roo.com

