

HOUSEPLANT TRENDS

IGCs should look to social media to keep up with what customers are coveting.

By Lisa Eldred Steinkopf

The houseplant trend isn't going anywhere anytime soon, especially for the "plant parents" demographic, where those plants are their babies.

It all started when one of our salespeople approached a friend who owned a garden center in White Plains, New York, and asked, "What do you do when you're not busy, during the off season, in the wintertime?"

I recently visited a local independent garden center and was surprised by how many, not only the "common" houseplants there were, but by the number of rare plants available. Plants I had never seen were abundant. I talked to George Papadelis, the owner of Telly's in Troy, Michigan, who had just recently returned from a trip to Florida to search for and buy rare houseplants.

What was he looking for? Aroids — the most popular group of houseplants on social media. Monsteras, anthuriums, philodendrons, aloccasias and more — and if they are variegated, all the better. He has seen a huge increase in his

houseplant sales, especially since COVID-19, as more people are working from home and want some green in their spaces.

Aroids Are All the Rage

I also had a long conversation with Jared Hughes of Groovy Plants Ranch near Columbus, Ohio. (Turn to page 42 to learn more about Hughes and Groovy Plants Ranch.) He agreed that aroids are hot right now — from anthurium to monstera and all the philodendrons in between. Young people have become collectors, and he sees Instagram and other social media platforms driving that. If a rare plant is posted on Instagram, especially by an influencer, that makes it the most coveted plant everyone needs.

And is money an issue? No. Jared says aroid sales are like "succulents on steroids." Succulents are still a hot commodity, but this aroid craze is over the top.

He also, like Papadelis, attributes a lot of this to the pandemic, as everyone is home with previously slated vacation



money to spend. If we must be in the house, let's make it a place we love and surround ourselves with things that make us happy. Right now, that is plants for many people.

Must-Haves and Minis

Though the rare plant sales are booming, Hughes also says a good selection of the more common houseplants at reasonable prices are must-haves. Beginners aren't going to drop hundreds of dollars on a plant they don't have any idea how to take care of. The ubiquitous spider plant and pothos of all kinds are still good sellers. He finds it can be difficult to find suppliers with good inventory for the rare plants so many smaller greenhouses like theirs are growing their own stock in-house.

Hughes has also seen an uptick in miniature plant sales. Maybe the house is full and there isn't room for any more plants unless they are mini plants, or maybe they are just the cutest thing ever, so people want them. On the flip side, large tree specimens are also popular. They are statement plants that you can't miss when you enter their homes.

That '70s Style

The 1970s macramé is still a hot trend, along with the newer trend of moss poles, which really isn't a "new" trend, but a throwback to the slab of wood that used to be included with a climbing plant back in the '70s. The poles are used to give something for your new aroid to climb, as the monstera, philodendrons and raphidophoras get those coveted larger mature leaves by climbing.

Styling Plants

Another trend we have noticed is the glass cabinets from Ikea being fitted with grow lights to make a space for plants that need more light or the higher humidity an enclosed

space provides. Or perhaps they just want to display their plants like a collection of china.

Along those lines, Maria Failla of Bloom and Grow radio also noticed that many of her followers are using "prop boxes" and other enclosed spaces to propagate plants. Making more of their babies and either sharing with friends or selling them seems to be the norm. She mentioned that hoyas are making a name for themselves with houseplant aficionados and one of her latest podcasts on Hoyas 101 was extremely well received.

New Ways to Grow

I see that finding new ways to grow plants is also a trend. LECA or lightweight expanded clay aggregate is becoming more popular. It is used for cultivating plants in a semi-hydroponic environment. The aggregate holds water and releases it to the plant roots. The best part is you can't overwater your plant.

The same goes for full hydroponic growing. If your plants are growing in water, you can't give them too much water, which can be a problem for some people. Don't allow them to dry out, though. Unlike potting medium, this doesn't provide any nutrition to the plant, so if providing LECA to your consumers, make sure you have the correct fertilizer sitting next to it for the complete sale.

By the time you read this article, there will probably be a new houseplant trend, as that is how fast everything is changing. But no matter the latest trend, the point is houseplants are here to stay and plant parents are eager to find the next one for their collection. Make sure you have the ones they are coveting. 🌱

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Her book is available at bookstores and online at Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.