



HOT NEW (AND OLD!) *Houseplants*

Social media is laden with images of plant-packed living rooms, bedrooms and studio apartments ... monstera, ficus, pothos, philodendrons and zamioculcas plants have followers that rival those of sports heroes or movie stars. So why have houseplants crept their way into the hearts and minds of the metaverse?

Houseplants satisfy so many niches. Time-strapped millennials who are looking for meaningful but easy-care relationships are plant collectors. Work-from-homers choose plants as silent and cheerful office mates. Pandemic-weary social distancers who want to connect to the great outdoors

can fill that green need with leafy plants. Plus, for the home-décor minded, plants are an inexpensive way to scratch that instant gratification itch. Houseplants themselves can take some of the credit; the availability of amazing and collectible plants makes the rise of houseplants one of the big stories of this past year.

All this makes houseplants a big business. A Marketplace report notes houseplant fans in the U.S. “spent \$8.5 billion more on gardening-related items in 2020 than they did in 2019, an increase of 18.7%, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.” Here’s what’s trending in the world of houseplants.



By Justin Hancock

Houseplants are the darlings of social media and can create excitement for your store and your customers.

Big Leaves

Fiddle leaf fig (*Ficus lyrata*) was and now *Monstera deliciosa* is one of the darlings of the interior design world. Rising contenders in the big leaf category include *Philodendron selloum* (aka *Thaumatococcus bipinnatifidum*), 'Xanadu' *philodendron* and *alocasia*.

These plants offer sculptural good looks thanks to their massive leaves. As a focal point, a living sculpture, or an anchor to a larger collector of smaller plants, their foliage delivers the lush tropical look and feel that home decorators and plant parents covet.

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Monstera adansonii and
Rhaphidophora hayi.

*Begonia
maculata*.



Fantastic Fenestration

Check out the knees of jeans and other distressed denim clothes — you’ll see that holes are still a fashion thing. Holes are “in” in the world of horticulture as well. Species that show off big splits and slits are appealing to plant buyers. Aroids, including monstera, pothos and philodendron, are super popular in all sizes, from the big leaves of *Monstera deliciosa* to smaller-leaved plants, such as ‘Little Swiss’ monstera and ‘Baltic Blue’ *Epipremnum pinnatum*. The irregular splitting leaves of monstera lookalikes, such as *Rhaphidophora tetrasperma*, offer exciting splits and holes in younger plants.

Swirly Variegation

Plant leaves splashed with white and cream coloration have always been popular. Unusual variegation patterns in all plant species are big winners, bringing some classic old-timers into new light. Golden pothos, for example, offers heart-shaped,

mid-green foliage splashed in creamy gold. ‘Marble Queen’ pothos has been around for decades thanks to its leaves that are heavily splashed and streaked with creamy white. And today it’s as popular as ever. ‘Manjula’ pothos (*Epipremnum ‘HANSOTI14’*) is a patented variety (PP27,117) with variegated foliage in shades of silver, white, cream and light green. Dieffenbachia offers showy new and old variegated options.

‘Sparkles’ (a perfect name to target much of the millennial crowd!) sports spots of gold on green leaves and ‘Compacta’ with medium-green leaves speckled heavily with creamy yellow in the centers. Jet Diamond spathiphyllum (a new upgrade over the old-fashioned Domino variety) is a showstopper for consumers, too, thanks to its dark green leaves that are irregularly splashed and streaked with white and silver. And even the ubiquitous snake plant (aka sansevieria or dracaena) offers a variety of yellow- and white-striped varieties, such as gold-accented ‘Gold Hahnii’ and

'Whitney', a dwarf variety with dark green leaves, edged in silvery-green, and variegated with light green stripes.

Colorful Leaves

The joyfulness of color is another big sweet spot for houseplant lovers. And there's more color to choose from than ever before. Cane begonias, for instance, bear leaves in a variety of shades, many of which appear to have a metallic finish. Gem-hued aglaonema cultivars — in their eye-catching shades of red, pink and gold — offer a painterly mix of leaf hues that rival the beauty of cut-flower bouquets, but you can remind shoppers that they last much longer.



Aglaonema.

Cane begonia.



Fun Leaf Shapes

Dramatic leaf shapes are a great entry point for new plant buyers because they offer something exotic and fun. Strappy leaves found in 'Network' calathea or 'Slim Jim' aglaonema, for example, offer flushes of fine foliage. Tall, spiky-leaf snake plants are a draw, and ideal for decorators looking to fill a vertical space. Pilea and peperomia offer an outstanding array of leaf sizes and shapes. Within the pilea clan, many shoppers still enjoy Pilea peperomioides and *P. involucrata*.

On the peperomia side, consumers love the heart-shaped leaves of Peperomia argyreia, the quilted look of 'Schumi Red' Peperomia caperata, and the succulent look of *P. rubella*. It's no wonder the National Garden Bureau chose peperomia for their first-ever "Year of the Houseplant."

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Curated Collections

One of the most Instagrammed looks is a jungly collection. This seemingly chaotic conglomeration is often carefully curated, with a variety of textures, leaf shapes and colors. Many of today’s plant lovers are also choreographers, mixing and matching plants for maximum impact. It’s not always about a specimen plant — it’s how all their plants look together (compare this to the excess of an English perennial border).

New Introductions

‘Raven’ ZZ with its glossy chocolate-colored leaves and lime-green new growth was received with rave reviews when introduced. ‘Global Green’ pothos offers an intriguing green-on-green variegated look. And *Geogenanthus ciliata* is a brand-new houseplant from southeast Asia, perhaps the first new genus introduced as a houseplant in the U.S. in the last decade.

Right: *Sansevieria* 'Moonshine'.




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Above: Pothos 'Global Green'. Right: Geogenanthus ciliatus, Scindapsus 'Moonlight' and peperomia 'Schumi Red'.

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Easy-Care Plants

Experienced plant owners experiment with hard-to-grow species, but new plant owners want easy plants that will translate into success. Plants that adapt to different types of light or withstand a couple missed waterings are good candidates for new entrants into the houseplant world. And that's a win: An easy-care plant transforms a new plant owner into a proud plant parent eager to add to their collection. 🌱

Justin Hancock, senior brand marketing manager at Costa Farms, is a horticultural professional with more than 20 years of experience in the industry who is passionate about plants. For more information, visit www.costafarms.com.



Rhaphidophora tetrasperma.

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