

Foliage Forecast

As more challenges mount, growers strive for versatility.

By Paul Rusnak
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Forecasting is not an exact science, but a lot of people — whether you're talking business or weather — pay attention and rely on it. The green industry is no exception when it comes to looking down the road. The twists and turns of the last couple of years have kept all growers on their toes. Some segments have experienced more turbulence than others. Ben Bolusky, executive vice pres-

ident of the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association (FNGLA), says the current landscape of the Florida foliage industry has been challenging thanks to pangs of transition.

“On one hand, traditional distribution channels are changing,” he says. “On the other hand, customer bases are diversifying.”

The Year That Was

2007 was predicted to be a good year for the foliage industry [see

Ornamental Outlook, January '07 issue, pages 16-20]. Bolusky says that prediction was pretty accurate.

“It was a good year — for most of the year,” he says. “Growers with niche markets, innovative products, and marketing generally did well. The last couple of months, business slowed in most sectors reflective of the economic slowdown caused, in part, by housing starts and construction jobs.”

Randy Strode, owner of Apopka, FL-based Agri-Starts, says last year

NEW FOLIAGE VARIETIES

Florica Farms

20754 Camphor Tree Rd.
 Eustis, FL 32736
 352-357-7772

Bright Stripes

Foliage featuring multi-colored striping is the stand-out characteristic of Dragon dracaenas. This fire-breather comes in seven different varieties, including: 'Green Jewel' (dark-green with broad, compact leaves that is faster growing than 'Janet Craig'); 'Jade Jewel' (dark-green edge and white-green stripes); 'Kanzi' (white-green, multi-colored stripes and a dark-green edge); 'Lemon Surprise' (yellow-lime stripe on the edge and multi-green color in the middle); 'Malaiika' (creme-green



Dragon dracaenas

in the middle with dark-green edge); 'White Jewel' (white-green multi-colored stripes); and 'White Surprise' (yellow-green stripe on the edge with white stripe and multi-green in the middle).

ForemostCo. Inc.

8457 Northwest 66th St.
 Miami, FL 33166
 800-421-8986
www.foremostco.com

All Jazzed Up

Aglaonema Donna Carmen is the second in ForemostCo's Jazzed Gems series of upscale, dramatic, and durable



Donna Carmen

indoor foliage plants. It features an attractive balance of colors, which give it an exotic look.

What A Joker

Named for its vibrant purple, green, and yellow colors, the Jester calathea is sure to catch attention.

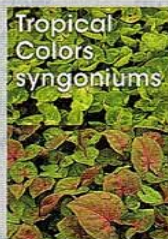


Jester

The fast-growing tropical blooms in green and white. The recommended pot sizes are 6, 8, and 10 inches. Jester grows hardy in Zone 10.

Spectacular Spectrums

Tropical Colors syngoniums boast a vivid splash of long-lasting color. Several selections are available and feature visual names such as 'Kiwi Delight,' 'Candy Berry,' 'Merry Maria,' and 'Pink Passion.' These plants are hardy in Zone 10.



Tropical Colors syngoniums

Milestone Agriculture

4707 Oak Hill St.
 Apopka, FL 32712
 407-889-7868
www.milestoneag.com

Standing Ovation

Let's hear it for spatiphyllum 'Bravo.' This variety, a product of the Daniel Cornelis breeding program, is an upright, medium-green specimen that is a fast and prolific grower. It is suitable for 6- to 8-inch production.



Bravo

The Ultimate

Spathiphyllum 'Ultima' stands at medium height and features a wide-leaf selection. It blooms early and has a soft-leaf presentation. 'Ultima' is intended for large containers, 8 inches and up.



Ultima

Hey Mickey

Spathiphyllum 'Mickey' is an offshoot of the 'Jetty' breeding line. The plant's profile is full and compact. It features wide leaves and is a fast finisher. 'Mickey' is geared for 6- to 8-inch production. It is available in spring.



Mickey

In The Zoe

Spathiphyllum 'Zoe' is perfect for 6- to 8-inch production. The upright and full plant is a fast finisher (24 weeks for a 6-inch specimen at Milestone's in-house trials.). 'Zoe' has medium-wide, dark-green, shiny leaves and will bloom in the spring and fall. 'Zoe' will be available in spring.



Zoe