

Myplant & Garden 2022 wraps up on a positive note

- despite a challenging business environment

According to its organisers, the sixth edition of Italy's horticultural trade exhibition Myplant & Garden left its mark.

One can't help but feel respect for Valeria Randazzo from event organiser V Group Srl, tree grower Gianpietro d'Adda from Pognano and all people involved in organising Myplant & Garden. Two years ago, they were the first to take the heart-wrenching decision to postpone their trade show when a cluster of Covid-19 infections engulfed the Lombardy and Veneto regions only four days before its opening. The show moved to September 2020 but eventually no longer took place that year. In 2021, Italy's premier horticultural trade event was cancelled for the third time. The fact that the show was back at Fiera Milano Rho's Convention Centre (22-24 February 2022) alone created enthusiasm and optimism for the future. However, optimism was partially overshadowed on day two when news broke that Russia had begun a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

18,650 VISITORS AND 650 EXHIBITORS

Looking back, V Group Srl hails the 2022 Myplant & Garden show as successful after 18,650 visitors attended, and exhibitors reported doing good business with a keen interest in the newest trees, shrubs, cut foliage, indoor plants, young plants, cut



VIP tour with Myplant & Garden organisers Valeria Randazzo and Gianpietro d'Adda at the right.

flowers, tech and services.

In November 2021, Myplant & Garden confirmed the presence of 750 exhibitors on a combined show floor of 45,000m² divided over three halls. The organisers even considered adding a fourth hall. Truth must be told that many exhibitors, including some of the captains of Italy's horticultural industry, cancelled their participation at the eleventh hour. Some spaces emptied, while organisers filled gaps up in such a clever way that they remained unnoticed. Eventually, the show floor hosted 650 exhibitors, of which 20 per cent came from abroad — mainly from Holland, Denmark, Germany and France.

FAITH IN FACE-TO-FACE BUSINESS

At Myplant & Garden 2022, the industry put back faith into face-to-face business. That is, half face-to-face because restrictions on large indoor events were still in place at the time of the event. Visitors needed to don a mask and show the details of their Covid-19 status by using a Covid pass.

After GreenTech, Trade Show Aalsmeer, and IFTF the three-day-event was the fourth major horticultural trade exhibition to take place in Europe since the pandemic outbreak in 2020. The event served as a barometer of the industry. It underscored the value of inspiration, innovation, and togetherness, with visitors and exhibitors agreeing that it felt good to be out again.



A Fiat 500 in the stand of floral wholesaler Gambin Fiori. Gambin is run by brothers Alessandro (cut flowers) and Giorgio Gambin (sales), and their cousin Mario (houseplants), operating from a site in the Santa Giulia district to the south-east of Milan, near Linate airport.



Floral design incorporating Clematis integrifolia by Marginpar.

BUOYANT MARKET BUT CHALLENGES AHEAD

Most of the conversations veered to the buoyant market in 2021 across all industry segments.

While most horticultural companies delivered the highest-ever annual sales in their history last year, the pertinent question is how to keep novice gardeners on board and if the strong demand for flowers and plants will stick.

The first signs from the bedding plant industry are not turning green entirely. Bedding plant growers from Italy told FCI that sales are below expectations so far. Many greenhouses are still filled to the brim while are not coming in thick and fast. Expectations were perhaps too high; sizeable numbers of plants with a limited shelf life, such as primroses, are already ending in the landfill.

The situation for tropical foliage plants for indoors is much better with good prices and strong demand, even if the skyrocketing energy prices cause a headache among growers.

In nursery stock, if you want to source avenue trees as a buyer, 2022 promises to be an extremely challenging year. Countries, regions, provinces, municipalities worldwide announced plans to expand urban green areas, and they must now live up to their promises to plant hundreds, thousands, even millions of trees. At the same time, particular species and varieties have already sold out in Italy, and the situation in the rest of Europe and the

world is no different. Even in the categories of smaller shrubs, including mainstream hedge plants such as Photinia or Prunus laurocerasus, supply chain constraints are taking their toll. It is anticipated that there will be a better equilibrium between the supply and demand of these products within a few growing seasons. But the lack of bigger trees will be there for many years. Growers of seedlings, cuttings and young plants were conspicuous by their absence at Myplant & Garden, proving their production has already sold out.



Potted Citrus is a staple product from Sicily.



Specimen olive trees.

LOGISTIC DISRUPTION

Over the past few weeks, Canadian-style trucker protests have spread worldwide. Also, in Italy, truckers hit the road to rally against Covid-19 mandates and soaring diesel prices. They blocked roads, disrupting the country's logistics and perishables industry.

Importers of plants, pots, containers, fertilisers, and packaging complained about spiking shipping costs. They calculated that for bringing in a container from the Far East, they now need to pay 15,000 dollars instead of the usual 2,000 dollars in pre-pandemic times. Considering what these prices mean, for example, a specimen tree nursery such as Anzano del Parco (Como)-based Nippon Tree, the situation is dire. This company grows macro bonsai, large plants, predominantly conifers such as *Pinus* and *Ilex crenata*, which have been trained into large bonsai trees.

If a container can hold 20 macro bonsai, this means an almost 1,000 euros increase for each plant, the kind of news customers are not happy to hear.

The same problem applies to some cut flowers, such as cut roses. Domestic production of cut roses is now near zero in Italy. Valentine's Day demand was strong, but the transport cost was so prohibitive that the clients' final cost was nearly 15 euros per stem.

Meanwhile, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine keeps greenhouse growers even longer awake as the war will drive up their energy bills even further.

Despite the extremely challenging business environment, exhibitors had opportunities



Myplant & Garden is arguably one of the most fashionable flowers and plant shows globally.

to network at this year's Myplant&Garden. So in that respect, the show marked a good start to the 2022 trading season in Italy and the rest of Europe.

Milan is one of the most fashionable cities globally, and it is safe to say that Myplant & Garden provided a boost to the city's image. Exhibitors put out all the stops to showcase their product offers.

For the occasion, the three halls of Fiera Milano Rho turned into a lush giant garden, beautifully decorated booths vying for attention.

No one understands better than the Italians that a trade show is a very visual affair and that there is a lot of competition for the eye. Top class stand design attracted attention

from across the trade show floor and automatically lured in visitors.

The show organisers conclude by saying, "What happened over the last week is extraordinary. Businesses have answered our call, recognising the value Myplant has, and operators have flocked to the event. All the effort and energy invested in this edition have proved their worth. We have developed new cooperations and paved the way for new projects. We are now focusing on developing our strengths. We are already working on the seventh edition, which will take place from 22 to 24 February 2023."



Calceolaria is a showy and brightly coloured houseplant, often referred to as pocketbook plants, slipper flowers or lady's purses.



Charles Lansdorp, informing attendees about wedding flowers.