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The Big Show

Home & Landscape Expo has something for everyone

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON



Succulents expert Kileen Alvidrez shows how to plant a vertical garden at Cal Expo.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOME & LANDSCAPE EXPO

A lot has changed in the quarter century since the Northern California Home & Landscape Expo debuted. A winter stalwart at Cal Expo, the three-day show is the state's largest of its kind, annually attracting more than 30,000 patrons.

"This is our 26th year, I can't believe it!" said show coordinator Stefani Norville. "Think about the number of years, the economic changes, the ups and downs in the housing market. So much has happened. I'm thankful to be where we are."

"The Big Show," as its aptly nicknamed, runs Friday through Sunday, Jan. 24-26. More than 1,000 vendors will pack Cal Expo, offering the latest products and services for home and garden.

Some trends are obvious, Norville noted.

"We could actually do a [standalone] solar show; there are so many solar vendors," she said. "Everything is going in that [clean energy] direction."

Our living spaces are getting smarter, she added. "We have a lot of automation; everything from garage doors to thermostats to efficient sprinklers with weather sensors. More technology is permeating all areas of our homes and gardens."

There's also a show within a show: The California Pets Showcase.

"We tried this last year and it was so busy," Norville said. "It fills a whole building. The vendors offer lots of freebies; I left with so much stuff for my dog. The idea came from our demographics. We found that more than 80% of people who attend show have a pet. We feature all small, really local companies."

On the plant side, succulents continue to be the big trend. At 3 p.m. Sunday, succulents expert Kileen Alvidrez will demonstrate how to plant and grow vertical succulent gardens. It's one of several featured workshops. (For a full schedule, go to homeandlandscapeexpo.com.)

Another trend: Our backyards continue to evolve into living spaces.

"The landscape designs are much more about creating environments like your living room," Norville said. "They're designed with company in mind, a space to relax and entertain, even in winter. We see that in all the landscape designs."

An annual highlight, the show includes four designer landscapes, each covering 1,000 square feet.

That's not easy in January. "Landscaping is what's lacking at other [winter] shows. Our show attracts the strongest group of that. We have one whole building that's only landscape and garden, with companies also into garden in other buildings and areas, too."

Speaking of landscape designers, the show pairs two of Sacramento's best known experts: Michael Glassman and Roberta Walker. For the first time, they'll be paired in special workshops at 2 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. Sunday as well as separate presentations.

"They've launched a new gardening podcast called 'Digging Deep,'" Norville said. "Their workshop will be an insiders' look at over 20 years in the industry. ... I definitely want to attend one of those." □



EVENT DETAILS

Northern California Home & Landscape Expo

Noon-6 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Cal

Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd.

Admission: \$10, children 12 and under admitted free; seniors (62 and older), teachers, military, police and fire personnel, half price Friday.

Debbie Arrington, an award-winning garden writer and lifelong gardener, is co-creator of the Sacramento Digs Gardening blog and website.