

Essen, 30 January 2026

Final Report

Great atmosphere, strong conversations: IPM ESSEN 2026 sends positive signals for the horticultural industry

Innovation and networking in demand as rarely before

“IPM ESSEN is the central international platform for orientation, exchange and future solutions,” summarises Oliver P. Kuhrt, CEO of Messe Essen. “Networking within the horticultural industry is essential today – the key to identifying trends early, finding answers together to structural challenges and consistently seizing new opportunities.” High economic pressure, uncertain markets and rising requirements in production and marketing shaped many discussions – at the same time, a strong determination to shape the future was clearly felt. Accordingly, demand was high for information, new technologies, innovative products and contemporary sales concepts to position businesses sustainably and for the long term. From 27 to 30 January, almost 40,000 trade visitors attended the 42nd world-leading horticulture trade fair.

A positive signal in challenging times: with 1,476 exhibiting companies, IPM ESSEN 2026 recorded three per cent more exhibitors than the previous year. The industry perceived this as a clear sign of confidence and relevance. The return of individual companies also underlined the fair’s attractiveness as an international business platform. According to a survey, more than 85 per cent of exhibitors intend to take part again.

In terms of content, the fair reflected the industry’s core task: making innovations market-ready, conserving resources, reaching new target groups and visibly embedding horticulture’s societal importance. “Once again, IPM ESSEN has proven to be the showcase of the green industry – and at the same time the central meeting point and marketplace for gardeners from all over the world. Here, it has once again become clear how innovatively horticulture is responding to current challenges,” concludes Eva Kähler-Theuerkauf, President of the Central Horticultural Association and the Horticultural Association of North Rhine-Westphalia.



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High international participation and decision-making authority

Feedback from the visitor survey underlines IPM ESSEN's importance as an international decision-makers' platform. 41 per cent of respondents travelled from abroad. Among international trade visitors, the Netherlands formed the largest visitor group, followed by Italy and other European markets such as the Czech Republic, Belgium, France and Romania. Great Britain/Northern Ireland, Spain and the USA were also among the most important countries of origin. At the same time, the trade fair was a place for concrete business initiation: at the time of the survey, 22 per cent of trade visitors stated that they place orders directly at IPM ESSEN. A further 63 per cent plan purchases afterwards on the basis of the contacts and information gained. Visitor quality remained high: 68 per cent of respondents described themselves as decision-makers.

Full supporting programme: knowledge, trends and inspiration up close

IPM ESSEN 2026 impressed with a packed supporting programme – as extensive as rarely before. The Gardeners' Forum in Hall 2 and the Innovation Center Horticultural Technology in Hall 4 attracted particularly strong interest and scored with top-class lectures. Highlights included the panel discussion "Fairtrade strengthens women" and Hexafarms' product presentation "Let our AI interpret your climate – 24/7". It became clear how strongly the industry is currently looking for context, best practices and practical solutions – from production and marketing through to strategic topics for the future.

The new Woodland Arena in Hall 7 was especially well received. It provided answers to pressing questions about climate-adapted and climate-positive urban greening and made the growing societal relevance of horticulture visible: urban resilience, quality of life and climate-adapted green concepts are increasingly coming into focus – an important lever to open up perspectives for the sector and strengthen its relevance in the public sphere and politics. Audience favourites included the talks "Woody plants for the future – plant selection for flood-prone areas" and "Biodiversity begins in the genes – the importance of native woody plants".

Sustainable horticulture and new approaches to customer engagement

Peat-reduced and environmentally friendly substrates were not only a key topic at exhibition stands at IPM ESSEN. At the International Plant Fair in Essen, the first “round table” discussions on phasing out the use of peat and possible alternatives were launched. Direct exchange among all stakeholders was the focus – practical, solution-oriented and with clearly high attention. At a high-level meeting of the green associations, Silvia Breher, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, also answered participants’ questions – a visible sign that IPM ESSEN also serves as a dialogue platform at the interface between industry organisations and politics.

Climate-resilient plants remain a key field for new breeding and product developments. At the same time, it became clear that the market is increasingly moving towards plant concepts that convey a lifestyle, with less focus on the individual product itself. In addition, sustainable and smart production, alternative materials, packaging and the circular economy came into focus – not as an add-on, but as a strategic necessity.

The transformation of communication and sales was also a noticeable focus. With the new content creator event “Green Vibes”, social media marketing was given its own stage: the industry is also changing in how it addresses target groups. Online retail is considered a major field for the future – especially for products such as flowers and plants, which have so far been purchased primarily in brick-and-mortar stores. In this context, new access and convenience solutions were presented, such as flower vending machines or smart gardening products designed to make access to flowers and plants as easy as possible.

The IPM Flower Stage attracted great attention with its exceptionally diverse floristry programme. International floral designers brought the fascinating world of flower arranging live to the revolving stage. The Hawaiian show “The Spirit of Aloha” and the cross-country performance by Carles J. Fontanillas, Alex Segura, Rudy Casati and Iza Tkaczyk in “Floos – the crafters’ secret” were especially met with enthusiasm.

The IPM Discovery Center by Kahler was a magnet for buyers from food retail as well as DIY store and garden centre chains. Realistic POS set-ups provided inspiration for sales-promoting customer engagement.

Awarded: prize ceremonies at IPM ESSEN 2026

Competitions and awards brought additional attention and visibility for innovation. At the IPM New Plants Showcase, eight plant novelties were honoured in the categories spring flowering plants, bedding and balcony plants, flowering indoor plants, woody plants, cut flowers and perennials: Pericallis x hybrida Senetti® Blue Spoon, Garden Gerbera Garvinea® Sweet Pastry, Tillandsia Camina®, Ficus carica Fignomenal ('PT-DF-14'PBR), Rhododendron hybrid 'Grazeasy® Purple', Cercis griffithii Blue Lagoon ('RAFMAR1'PBR), Clematis AMAZING®™ TOKYO ('Zo07201'PBR) and Yucca 'French Flag' (PBR). The Audience Award went to the cannabis plant BCN Critical XXL Autoflower. The Show Your Colours Award was won by the Pick-&-Joy® aubergine Solanum melongena from Vreugdenhil Young Plants. Zuidpark in Antwerp (Belgium) won the Green Cities Europe Award. Floristry craftsmanship was judged at the IPM Trade Fair Cup – the motto: "Where nature knows no boundaries". The overall winner was Bärbel Grzenia from Gartencenter Wansing in Neuss.

IPM ESSEN 2027

The next world-leading horticulture trade fair will take place from 26 to 29 January 2027 at Messe Essen.

More information at: www.ipm-essen.de