

Features

6/15/2010

Bring on Spring

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I've been preaching for years that Pack Trials ... er, Spring Trials, as we now call them, are primarily for growers, and this year proved me right! There were fewer retail-style displays, fewer POP ideas, fewer over-the-top container gardens and fewer new "brand" ideas than any year in recent history. Instead, the focus was primarily on new varieties, and on the technical aspects of production, both from the breeding companies and from supporting chemical, fertilizer and media companies.

Oh sure, Ellen Wells over on the *Green Profit* side of this coverage will try to wow you with the retail aspect of Spring Trials—and I'll admit there was some of that. The tag and POP companies were out in full force. Those breeders and distributors who do consumer promotions made sure attendees knew about it. I can even think of a display or two that you could easily steal for your garden center. Hmmm, maybe Spring Trials ARE still for retailers, too.

But you growers certainly weren't forgotten this year. There's a wide selection of new genetics to try, from black petunias (Black Velvet from Ball FloraPlant) and jumbo-flowered New Guineas (Magnum from Dümmer) to "heirloom hybrid tomatoes" (Rambling series by Floranova) and even variegated cat grass (by Thompson & Morgan). And there was plenty of non-plant information available, too, with product displays and trials by suppliers such as OHP and Fafard; an emphasis on technical services capabilities by breeders like Syngenta; even an Ellepot display by Florida plug producer Knox Nursery.

As always, we can't cover it all, but we bring you the biggest assortment possible. Here's Part 1 of the highlights from the 2010 Spring Trials - enjoy!

Coming Up in August

Get even more Spring Trials coverage next month when we highlight the new vegetative series, perennials and woodies, and lots of POP and marketing ideas.



“I Remember ...”

That’s one key to identifying varieties with potential: Do you still remember them at the end of Spring Trials? These pass that test.

Petunia Black Velvet (Ball FloraPlant)

Ball says it’s the first true black petunia, but don’t think of it only for Halloween. Think of it like the “little black dress” that goes with any color, at any season. (Phantom and Pinstripe are yellow and white striped versions).

For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).

New Guinea Impatiens Magnum Series (Dümmen)

The best way into this crowded category is with extra-big flowers. Based on comments from trial visitors, Magnum left an impression. The series starts with six colors. For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).



Iberis Masterpiece (Jaldety)

Big, pure white flowers set off this evergreen, shrubby perennial. It was the first variety raved about to us this spring by a trial attendee.

Tomatoes Rambling Rose Stripe, Rambling Red Stripe, Tumbling Tiger (Floranova)

The first of the new “heirloom hybrid”-style tomatoes we’ve seen commercially. They combine the look and flavor of an heirloom with the vigor and disease resistance of a hybrid. And these are for baskets, making them extra trendy. For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).



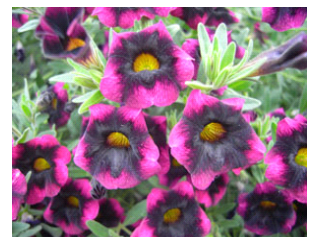
Scaevola Suntastic (Westhoff)

Memorable for being the first yellow in a crop that’s been boringly dominated by white, blue and lavender.

For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).

Calibrachoa Superbells Blackberry Punch (Proven Winners)

A stunning bicolor. Women were heard to say, “I wear that color!” Plant habit isn’t as good as others in the series ... but women don’t care, if they like the color. For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).



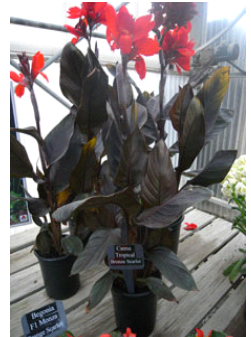


Pansy Plentifall series (PanAmerican Seed)

We've put pansies in hanging baskets for years ... whether or not they should be there. This series truly does look like it will offer an appropriate trailing habit. Three colors and a mix. For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).

Canna Tropical Bronze Scarlet (American Takii)

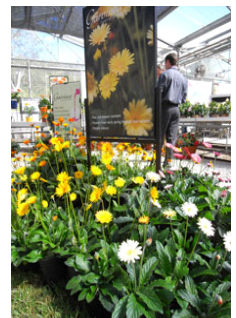
This introduction stood out for four reasons: Tropical is still the only seed canna series on the market (no viruses!); this is the first seed canna with bronze foliage; anything with bronze foliage will sell—especially when it's got a striking scarlet flower; and tropical plants are as hot as ever. (This was a Ball Seed exclusive last year.) For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).



SimplySalad (PanAmerican Seed)

Ball Horticultural's seed geniuses have figured out how to put multiple varieties of seed into one pellet. The result is called "Fuseables." Part of that line is called "SimplySalad"—a blend of salad greens in one easy-to-sow seed pellet. For a video of this program, click [HERE](#).

Gerbera Garvinea series (Florist/Northern Innovators) All of you in Zones 7 and 8 can now enjoy gerberas in your gardens year-round thanks to Florist's new perennial gerbera series. While the plants aren't quite as tidy, compact and floriferous as modern seed series, it makes up for it in hardiness. Also, their heavy foliage makes them somewhat insect resistant. Fourteen colors. For a video of this series, click [HERE](#).





Abutilon Lucky Lantern (PlantHaven)

Shown as an experimental, this sturdy, floriferous flowering maple series offers extra-large flowers in Yellow, Tangerine and White (Red is coming).

For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).



Variegated cat grass (Thompson & Morgan)

Perhaps the strangest crop we've ever put in a "memorable" category, this variegated selection of barley is here because the pet grass category has loads of untapped potential (Americans spent \$45.5 billion on pets in 2009), AND because it can also be blended into nutritional drinks by humans (Americans spend \$40 billion a year on alternative medicine). For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).

New Seed Series

Back when they were called Pack Trials, seed was the only game in town. Now seed is the minority, and while additions to existing series are common, whole new series are relatively rare, and a reason for excitement. Here are the ones we found (unless those already mentioned above).



Impreza Impatiens (PanAmerican Seed)

Impreza has been specially bred to have less apical dominance, which means better holdability on the grower bench and retail table, with less PGRs to achieve the results. But it still fills out nicely in the garden. Eight colors and seven mixes.

Brassica (flowering kale) Lucir Series (Takii)

Definitely a niche item, this cut ornamental kale has glossy, waxless leaves that show off the color contrast between the leaf and center much better than others, such as Crane. Lucir starts with Rose and White.





Dianthus Diabunda series (Syngenta)

This new Dianthus x barbatus series is early and compact and times easily for late winter and early spring sales. Six colors.

Cyclamen Michelangelo Mini Marble Leaf (Schoneveld)

This F1 cyclamen offers striking green and silver foliage with five different flower colors. This member of the Super Serie Compact line is suited for 3-in. to 4.5-in. pots.

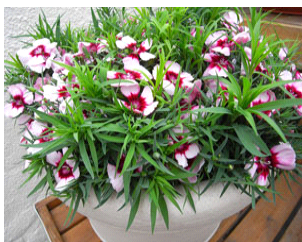


Gerbera Autumn Colors (Syngenta)

This cheery mix offers large, semi-double flowers in shades of red, orange and yellow. Larger than Syngenta's Jaguar series, Autumn Colors is good for 5 in. and larger pots. At some point separate colors may be added.

Salvia New Dimension series (Kieft)

You'll probably see this in our perennial coverage next month, but since it's a seed item, and a new series, we'll put it here first. This first-year flowering perennial is hardy to Zone 5 and comes in Blue and Rose.

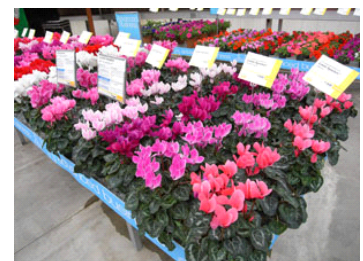


Venti Parfait dianthus (Syngenta)

The first color in the series, Venti Parfait Crimson Eye features super-sized flowers, but a compact habit that allows for high-density production. And it has minimal heating requirements.

Cyclamen Laser Synchron Series (Syngenta)

Synchro in this case means improved; the Laser cyclamen series has been upgraded for excellent uniformity of habit and bloom time. Great for bench-runs, meaning it could easily fit into a "For the Masses" category. Nine colors and a mix.



Viola Sorbet XP Series (PanAmerican Seed)

XP is PanAmerican's upgrade to its key lines for improved uniformity and a tighter bloom window, and now Sorbet gets the treatment. Plus the series gains five new colors: Orange, Beaconsfield, Lavender Vein, Purple and Yellow Duet.

Winning Combinations

It's not a fad: Combination planters are here to stay. And breeders are working to make them easier for you to create, whether through simple recipe ideas, or combining several cuttings into one liner or even several seeds into one pellet.



Fuseables (PanAmerican Seed). Proving that there's still plenty that can be done with seed, PanAm has found a way to combine several colors or even different species into one seed pellet and have them all germinate and grow together. The result is Fuseables. Most noteworthy is SimplySalad, but the ten other combinations include varieties of juncus, lobelia, bacopa and petunia. The results are quick, easy and low-cost.

Dümmen's Confetti Mixes. This multi-liner offering has nine new combinations, including Ice Wine, Laguna Beach, Piece of Cake, Paper Moon, and Banana Split. Watercolors (pictured) was an attendee favorite.



Selecta's TrixiLiners. Selecta's mixed rooted liner program, shown at Ball's trial, offers some new combinations such as "Tequila Sunrise" (MiniFamous Apricot with Red Eye, Vampire, and Double Lemon calibrachoa) and "Melon Sorbet," pictured (MiniFamous Compact Watermelon and Coral Pink and Bacopa Big White Falls.) The line now offers 17 recipes.

Kwik Kombos (Syngenta). A big difference between Syngenta's offering and the others is size: Syngenta offer a Fertiss liner in a smaller 102-count tray (same as their geranium strip), which means twice as many liners per shipment, cutting freight costs. They offer 17 combinations and are evaluating more than 50 new ones, and will offer unrooted Kombo packages next year.

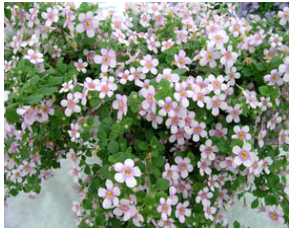




Suntory's "Breeder's Choice" mixed combos. Here's an interesting idea: Visit your breeder's garden, discover that he has a spectacular collection of mixed combinations of his own design that work beautifully together, and offer the breeder's recipes to your customers. It's not a program—just recipes—but it's another source of inspiration.

Beauties for Baskets

More and more consumers are choosing the convenience offered by baskets and containers. Hang or place the finished product and they have a garden instantly. Here are a few new introductions that will help you meet the demand for these grab-and-go gardens.



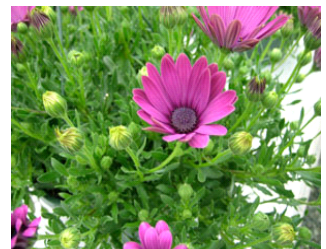
Bacopa Secrets XXL Series from Cohen. Large flowers with a diameter of 1 1/4 in. cover the foliage of this mounding plant. Central Pink, Blue Delight and Silver Sky join White in the series.

Three new Scopia Gulliver bacopas—Blue, Silver and Dynamic White from Danziger—have flowers of an inch or larger. A compact, trailing habit make these ideal for baskets. They suspect Dynamic White will be the biggest seller. For a video of these varieties, click [HERE](#).



Oro Farms' Balconita Series of trailing vegetative pansies were bred by David Kerley in England. Use as a premium basket item for early-spring sales. Available in five colors. For a video of this series, click [HERE](#).

Osteos for baskets? You bet. The **Sun Brella series** from Sunny, a Greenex company, includes Corona, Taurus and White. These were bred specifically for baskets and to be produced entirely outdoors.





From Takii, **trailing petunia Raspberry Ice and Light Blue** join the Opera Supreme Series. These are floriferous, are less daylength sensitive and have a low, spreading habit, helping them to form large, round baskets. Just one plant will spread 4 ft!

From Suntory comes a new “bouquet” habit in **Million Bells calibrachoa** that’s very tidily mounded ... just like a bouquet of flowers. Here are Million Bells Bouquet Brilliant Pink and Orange. For a video of this series, click [HERE](#).



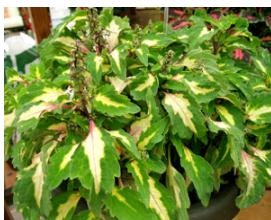
From GGG, **Lobster Red** joins the **Sweet Pleasure petunia series**. It has medium-sized blooms and it takes the weather, just as a basket item should.

A stunning color in petunias, this is Blanket Violet, from Green Fuse Botanicals. Great for baskets, of course, but also for the landscape. For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).



Look, Ma, No Flowers!

Not every plant needs flowers to make it sing in the landscape or in patio pots. Here are just a few new non-bloomers we spotted during Spring Trials.



Coleus Mosaik Series from Syngenta (pictured Mosaik Amazon Green).

Begonia Gryphon from PanAmerican Seed.

For a video of this variety, click [HERE](#).



Sedum Elsie’s Gold from PlantHaven.

Fuchsia Autumnale from GroLink—that's right, a fuchsia for its foliage!

***Pennisetum purpureum* Graceful Grasses Vertigo from Proven Winners.**

“And the Award Goes To ...”

If you don't trust any other reason for trying a new variety, you can always look for honors and accolades its received in the industry. All-America Selections and Fleuroselect are two worthy stamps of approval. Here are a few current winners that were on display at Spring Trials.

Marigold Moonson Deep Orange from Syngenta (AAS Flower Award)

Zinnia Double Zahara Cherry, Zahara Starlight Rose from PanAmerican Seed (AAS Bedding Plant Award);

Viola Endurio Sky Blue Martien by Syngenta (AAS Cool Season Award)

Sweet Pea Villa Roma from Hem Genetics (Fleuroselect Gold)