

Features

6/27/2013

Color for Your Customers

Chris Beytes, Ellen C. Wells and Jennifer Zurko

Photography by Chris Beytes, Ellen Wells and Jennifer Zurko

Independent Streak

Big boxes have their specialties and those are the plants that are typically not so special. Bench-run varieties are their deal of the day. And that's just fine, because the independent garden center has the know-how to not only grow and care for these beauties (and beasts), but also to display them so they ring the registers. The following varieties are made for that special independent touch.



1. Digiplexis Illumination Flame (distributed by Cultivaris). Digi-what? Digiplexis, not a real genus, of course. It's an intergeneric cross between digitalis and isoplexis. It's tall, with stalks that never stop blooming—and a ton more stalks always ready to grow up from below. What a thriller for a combo pot!

2. Lofospermum Lofos Compact White and Compact Rose (Suntory). Talk about a perfect basket item. But it's compact, so it's a tad easier to ship—or a great item for the grower-retailer. Flowers bloom on top and all the way down for a cascade of color. The Rose is a gorgeous color (pictured).

3. Streptocarpus Ladyslippers Yellow with Purple Cap (Green Fuse Botanicals). A houseplant with high style, the Ladyslippers are in Green Fuse's "lifestyle plant" category, which are plants that consumers can have success with without getting their hands dirty. A perfect item for the "deco-gardener."

4. Plectranthus Harlan Quinn (EuroAmerican). Plectranthus are wonderful container items—by themselves or in a combo. Blooms are on the pink side of purple for something a bit different.



5. *Amaranthus gangeticus* Carnival (Thompson & Morgan). Speaking of items ideal for combo containers, this amaranthus, or “summer poinsettia,” adds that pop of fluorescent pink every hot-colored combo is craving.

6. *Viola* Hip Hop (Hort Couture). Quite honestly, it’s the packaging and the peripherals that will make this viola irresistible on the retail bench. The POP is more than adorable. Place Hip Hop in customized Easter-themed pots, baskets and displays, and it’s a sure sale for the holiday.

7. *Colocasia* Morning Dew (PlantHaven). Not only do these large leaves have an interesting splatter of green hues, but the stems are also multicolored. Getting to be about 4 ft. tall, Morning Dew is good for landscapes and in large containers.

8. *Ipomoea* FloraMia (Dümmen). This sweet potato vine is meant to have purple flowers—and they’re on the big side, too. Good for beds and containers, it would pair well in a purple-themed combination.

An Edible Array

The edible category has been a consistent seller for a half-dozen years or more. This year’s Spring Trials again offered new twists on some veggie garden favorites—including adding them to the ornamental garden—plus a few varieties that would make you ask, “What is that?”



1. SimplyHerbs (PanAmerican Seed). This new single-species, multi-seed pellet from PanAmerican produces plugs that fill out a 4-in. pot nice and fast without wasting seed. SimplyHerbs includes some of the most popular herbs, including dill, basil, parsley, sage and thyme.

2. Try Basil (Burpee Home Gardens). This unique basil mixture lets consumers “try” three varieties of basil in one pot. One pellet contains a blend of Genovese, serrated and dark-red basil types.

3. Tomatoes Apricot Dream and Red Profusion (Floranova). While lots of recent consumer tomato breeding has focused on small-sized plants, the folks at Floranova have found that the standard-sized tomato plants offer the best chance to increase fruit sweetness. Apricot Dream (pictured) is this year’s effort to

produce a sweeter tomato on a vertically growing plant. Red Profusion is a trailing basket variety that's ready in 14 weeks.



4. Allium Quattro F1 (Hishtil). An edible flowering perennial, Quattro sets edible blooms like chives and produces long, flat leaves that taste like tender garlic. You can even snip the flower stalks and stick in a vase!

5. Cuarzo and Fortune Squash (Syngenta). Pulled from Syngenta's stock of veggie offerings for small commercial vegetable growers, Cuarzo (pictured)—known as “grey zucchini”—and Fortune (a variety that's yellow from the start) meet the demand for specialty veggies for the home gardener.

6. Aspabroc Broccolini and Peppermint Swiss Chard (Sakata). Aspa—what? Consider it broccoli with long thin spears reminiscent of asparagus, otherwise known as broccolini. Aspabroc (pictured), however, has none of the bitterness common with broccolini. Sakata's Peppermint Swiss chard is nearly too pretty to eat with its red-and-white-striped stems. Its coloration and large leaves make it as much an ornamental as a vegetable.

Multitudes of Multicolors

Color in the garden is great to have, and for many consumers, the more the merrier. That's where multicolors can make it easy for you—one plant with lots of color for your customer. Here are some of the cool multicolor varieties we spotted at Spring Trials this year.



Petunia Moonlight Eclipse (Suntory)
pictured 1.

Osteospermum Astra Terracotta (Florensis)
pictured 2.

Dahlia Dahlinova Hypnotica Tequila Sunrise (Fides)
pictured 3.

Petunia Cascadias Indian Summer (Danziger)

pictured 4.

Gerbera Cartwheel Strawberry Twist (Syngenta)
Ornamental Pepper Harlequin (Greenex)
Petunia Sparkler (Thompson & Morgan)
Snapdragon Snappy—five new bicolors (Hem Genetics)

Water Wise

As many parts of the country know from experience, drought conditions can pop up and stay for extended periods. Many of our conventional garden plants just can't take the heat and low-water conditions. Breeding companies are taking note and offering water-wise plants that can make it through the lean times. This year's drought-tolerant offerings include:



1. Savvy Succulents (EuroAmerican Propagators). EuroAmerican's John Rader says all sides of the industry have seen tremendous growth in demand for succulents. His company now offers retail-ready succulent dish gardens in 8-, 10- and 12-in. sizes and is working on 306-packs of assorted succulent types for retailers to sell along with empty dish gardens as a DIY planting project. What's key here, John says, is offering a variety of colors and textures that will appeal to customers.

2. Echeveria Coral Reef Series (Green Fuse Botanicals). The series starts with Red, Aqua and Pink (pictured). According to Green Fuse's Steve Jones, the breeding direction here is going toward forms that are novel and attractive to new and younger consumers.

3. Succulents from Jaldety. Their line of water-wise succulents is constantly expanding and covers a wide range of habits and textures. Some of the new intro-highlights this year are Senecio Blue, Senecio Silver, Santolina Lemon Fizz and Sedum Coca Cola (pictured). **GP**