

Features

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CAST Through Zoom

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Although the live event was cancelled amidst concerns for the safety and wellness of visitors because of COVID-19, the California Spring Trials—the industry’s most important showcase of new plant varieties—continued on anyway, with leading breeders and plant introduction companies taking advantage of the Internet and creative digital ways to introduce hundreds of new annuals, perennials and more to the industry.

GrowerTalks was front and center (with notepads in hand) at our computers just a week after the actual event was scheduled to take place to capture the essence of the event and learn about the latest and greatest coming to your greenhouses in 2021. Your four editors did Zoom interviews with nearly every Trial exhibitor, asking the same questions we would have in person: What’s new? Who is it for? What makes it stand out? What’s it compare to? Is there seed in the bag? The following is the end result of our nearly two weeks of interviews. (You can read all our “daily”

coverage and see videos from most of the breeders at www.springtrials.com.)

Spring Trials 2020 new varieties were amazingly diverse, from annuals and perennials to tropicals, potted plants and edibles, and we’re excited to share some of our favorite new innovations with you. In the pages ahead, you’ll see genetic innovations, color breakthroughs, production problem solvers and plenty of hot new crops to take your greenhouse game to the next level.

Stay Tuned!

Wait! That’s not all! Despite a non-traditional 2020 CAST, GrowerTalks is finding plenty to write and report on. Find continuing coverage of Spring Trials in the August issue where we’ll feature perennials, shrubs and anything else that we noticed on our second pass through our notes.

Memorable Intros



SunPatiens Compact Hot Pink, Compact Rose Glow (Sakata)

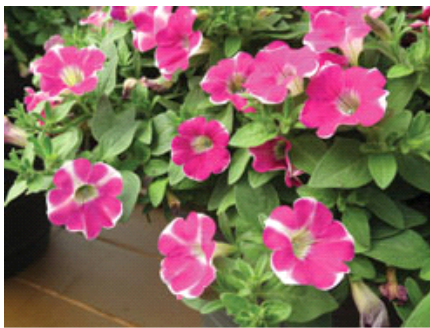
SunPatiens are now in their 15th year, which, to us, gives them the official classification of “venerable”—meaning been around long enough to have earned respect. The series gets two additions, both to the “Compact” sub-series. Rose Glow truly does seem to glow, even in photographs. It’s a new color for the series, we were told. Hot Pink is going to replace Neon Pink, as it’s been bred for better heat and drought tolerance—improvements the whole line has been getting.

Petunia Supertunia Royal Velvet Improved (Proven Winners)

Normally, we don't bother with improvements in our Spring Trials coverage, but since this just happens to be Proven Winners' No. 1 best seller, we're making an exception. The improvement is for a tighter, less-stringy habit, better branching and more flowers, and earliness. Best of all, Royal Velvet Improved retains the same rich color of the best -seller it's replacing.

Petunia Bee's Knees (Ball FloraPlant)

It's the richest, deepest yellow you'll find on a vegetative petunia.. Medium vigor, they say, with “terrific” garden performance. We love the name, too!—easily remembered long after you first see its vivid flowers. Bee's Knees is a stand-alone, not part of a series



Petunia Surfinia Purple Heart (Suntory)

This new variety brings another heart-shaped center to the series. We agree with Delilah Onofrey, who handles marketing for Suntory, that it will be excellent in baskets and containers for cause-marketing campaigns supporting Armed Service members.

Petunia Easy Wave Rose Fusion (PanAmerican Seed)

This variety joins the grower-friendly Easy Wave series of Wave petunias, bringing a bicolor to the group, with mid-rose blooms and deep-rose veins. It's early and versatile, making it ideal for handle packs, quarts, gallons and baskets.

Osteospermum Gelato (Westhoff)

The first osteospermum from Westhoff is a modern, compact-but heavy-flowering, series that will work well in sizes from 4-in. to 1-gal. The series launches with six colors; our favorite is Cranberry (pictured).



Impatiens Beacon Rose (PanAmerican Seed)

Rose brings the groundbreaking series to seven colors and two mixes. Naturally, it sports the same “high resistance” to Impatiens Downy Mildew of the rest of the series. One upgrade to the line: it now has coated seed, to make it easier to sow.

Geranium Caldera (Syngenta)

This new interspecific series is described as the same flower intensity and heat tolerance of the Calientes, but with a large, vigorous, spreading habit that makes it a good choice for in-ground plantings, baskets and combos. You can tell from the flowers that it leans toward the ivy geranium side of the family. Three colors: Salmon, Red and Pink.

Impatiens Imara XDR & Vinca Cora XDR (Syngenta)

Both of Syngenta's disease-tolerant garden workhorses have new introductions. The first, the Imara XDR series of impatiens, which is tolerant to IDM (Impatiens Downy Mildew), has added five new mixes: Pastel, ProFormula, Rosy, Tango and Hot! (pictured). The second is additions to the Cora Vincas. Cora XDR gets an Apricot, while Cora Cascade gets a Bright Rose (pictured).

New Annuals Series



Begonia Double Delight, Double Up (Proven Winners)

Double Delight is a tuberous begonia suited especially well for hanging baskets, judging from its habit. It's vigorous, but still looks good in the Proven Winners Grande-size container. Showy double flowers have a nice citrusy scent

(or so they tell us; Zoom doesn't yet offer smell-a-vision). They'll take part-sun to sun conditions, and we're told they've been selected for improved *Xanthomonas* resistance. Two colors: Blush Rose and Primrose (pictured).

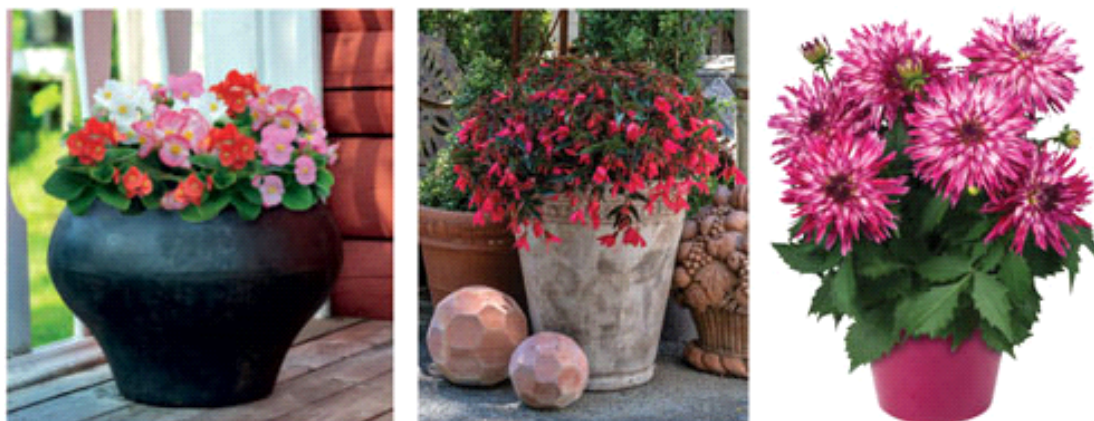
Double Up is a vegetative wax (*semperflorens*) begonia with fully double flowers on tight, ball-shaped, medium-sized plants. Three colors: Red, White and Pink (pictured). Pink is green-leafed, while Red and White sport chocolate-bronze foliage.

Snapdragon Fruit Salad Up, Fruit Salad Classic (Cohen)

All-new breeding completely upgrades two existing snapdragon series. Fruit Salad Classic is a hanging basket type with five colors that are uniform, with equal growth and flower size, ready for market faster than in years past. They flower all summer long in Orange, Wine, Yellow, Pink (pictured) and White. The Fruit Salad Up series has an upright habit and is ideal for pot production. Four colors in the series: White, Purple, Yellow and Apricot.

Begonia l'Conia Bacio (Dümmen Orange)

A new compact member of the dark-leafed l'Conia hybrid begonia family, Bacio (which means "little kiss" in Italian) is a scaled-down version of the l'Conia Portofinos (which are for 6- to 8-in. pots). Bacio is well-suited for 4- or 5-in. pots or quarts. The Bacios come in four colors—Peach, Salmon, White and Orange. The l'Conias are equally at home in full sun or shade.



Begonia Super Cool (Benary)

With excellent vigor allowing for production in cooler temperatures and beefy plants in the garden, this new *semperflorens* series is ideal for pack production. Up to a week earlier than other series, it brings grower and retailer benefits to the table. The series includes Bicolor, Pink, Red, White and a Mix (pictured).

Begonia Groovy (Benary)

Groovy is a new compact *B. boliviensis* series that features smaller plants, which means they're more easily shipped. Flowers are still large, however. Five colors in all: Mellow Yellow, Orange, Red, Rose (pictured) and White.

Dahlia MegaBoom Berry Blast (Dümmen Orange)

Berry Blast is the first color in a new series that will no doubt gain more members in the future. The plants are quite compact, yet feature an XXL-sized flower with shorter peduncles than others of this type. Berry Blast has vivid bicolor blooms with streaks or splashes of color across the petals.



Gerbera Garvinea Cheeky (HilverdaFlorist)

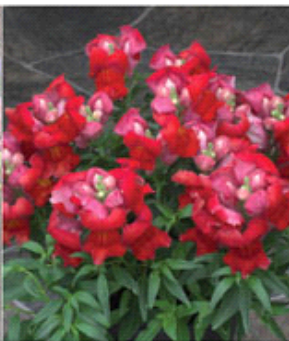
A new series of compact Garvinea with mini flowers that keep blooming continuously from spring to frost, Cheeky is an innovative intro. Four vibrant colors make up the series: Magenta, Orange, Red (pictured) and Yellow.

Petunia DuraBloom (Dümmen Orange)

DuraBloom is a first in interspecific petunias for Dümmen. It's bred for strong roots to endure heat and drought. It's beefy and tough, they say, and is great in combos because it mingles well, blooms young in 306 packs and can be compared to Proven Winners' Vistas. There are seven colors, including Electric Lilac and Royal Pink (introduced last year).

Impatiens Sol Luna (Danziger)

These interspecifics, Lisa Heredia told us, are the "future of New Guineas," mainly because you can put them anywhere, sun or shade. The Sol Lunas all have a well-matched, compact habit and are good for packs, quarts and gallons. Four colors: Tropical Punch, Pink, Dark Lavender and Candy Apple (pictured).



Snapdragon Statement (Takii)

Statement is an F1 dwarf snap (meaning almost mini, at just 8- to 10-in. tall in the garden). It's bred for lots of side branches, which means lots of flowers. The series starts with five colors, with more on the way.

Begonia Prism (Westhoff)

Westhoff has you covered with Begonia Prism, a 14-color series that they say is 10 to 15% more vigorous than the market leader, Nonstop. Westhoff's Bart Hayes says Prism will finish sooner, with flowers that hold above the foliage, continuing to raise the breeding bar on tuberous begonias.



Begonia Grace (Syngenta)

Grace is a *Begonia boliviensis* that fits well in basket and container programs. Cascading, double flowers on densely branched plants. Three colors—Dark Red, Orange and Pink—looking sharp against the medium-green foliage.

Calibrachoa Cha-Cha (Ball FloraPlant)

Cha-Cha is 25% more vigorous than Cabaret, their mid-sized series (Congo is their compact series), and was bred for big baskets and premium containers. It's early and very uniform across the colors. The series starts with five colors: Deep Blue, Frosty Lemon, Tangerine, Diva Apricot and Diva Hot Pink (Diva indicates colors that change color).

African Marigold Marvel II (PanAmerican Seed)

An upgrade to the old Marvel series, F1 Marvel II is a week faster to flower under long days. And it's 20% larger than their Taishan series, growing 16- to 18-in. tall, with 3-in. blooms. Comes in Gold, Orange, Yellow and a Mixture.



Petunia FotoFinish, Flash Forward (Syngenta)

Syngenta has two new seed petunia series this year. FotoFinish is a fast-finishing, spreading series that's well-matched in habit and flowering across the colors. It finishes in nine to 10 weeks from sowing, thanks to reduced daylength sensitivity. Ideal for high-density growing, FotoFinish holds well at retail. And with little or no PGRs needed, it really takes off in the garden. Nine colors and two mixes. FotoFinish will replace two older series, Plush and Ramblin'.

FlashForward, a spreading multiflora type, is an upgrade and replacement for the Picobella Cascades. Early to flower, these are tidy plants that "play well with others," meaning they're ideal for container combos. Flowers hold up well in summer weather. There are 11 colors and three mixes.

Begonia Florencio (Syngenta)

Florencio is Syngenta's first foray into interspecific hybrid begonias. The breeding is from Koppe out of Holland. These have an upright, grower-friendly habit, medium vigor and are good for mid- to large-sized containers. All five colors have dark foliage. That's Florencio Red, pictured.



Lobelia Glow (Danziger)

A compact and mounded lobelia series well-suited for quarts. Heat tolerant, too, and so floriferous. Two colors: Electric Blue and White Lightening.

New Guinea Impatiens Harmony Colorfall (Danziger)

A truly trailing, premium item for shade baskets, pots and combos. It's the Harmony genetics you know, with a new trailing habit. There are 12 colors in all. That's Neon Red, pictured.

Petunia Scoop (Danziger)

A new series of early, smaller-flowered petunias for packs and quarts. Think of it as a "scoop" of petunia atop a small pot. Requires little or no PGRs and are meant for high-density production. Eight bright colors with tasty names like French Vanilla, Lemon Ice and Cherry Gelato (pictured).



Cosmos Casanova (Hem Genetics)

A whole new crop for Hem, Cosmos Casanova is genetically compact, requiring no PGRs. With four colors (Pink, Red, Violet, White) plus a Mix, it's well suited for 4- and 6-in. pots or premium packs.

Vinca Quasar (Green Fuse)

This vegetative vinca series launches with five bold colors: Deep Space Blue, Plum Swirl, Orange Target, Red Target and Salmon Target. It will perform well in premium quarts and larger pots, bringing summer performance to any garden space.

Ipomoea Sweet Georgia (Green Fuse)

The Sweet George series stands out from the crowd because of its uniformity. This is a true series, not just a collection, says Steve Jones, that will stay compact in your mixed combos. The series features all the traditional ipomoea foliage shapes in all the key ipomoea colors.

Other Notable New & A+ Additions



Ipomoea Sweet Caroline Medusa Green (Proven Winners)

Here's another foliage plant generally used as an accent or component plant, but it's so interesting, it might just get to star in its own containers. Ipomoea Sweet Caroline Medusa Green features unique seven-lobed palmate leaves and looks great in a hanging basket on its own.

Lantana Luscious Royale Red Zone (Proven Winners)

A sterile variety and top lantana performer in recent trials, it has a tighter habit than other lantanas. A grower-friendly option with orangey-yellow to red blooms and dark foliage, even in hot climates.

Coleus ColorBlaze Royale Pineapple Brandy (Proven Winners)

Trials show this compact coleus has a perfect little habit for landscapes and containers. It was bred for heat tolerance and extremely late flowering, extending performance into the fall. The color is attractive: chartreuse foliage with bronze accents.



Anemone Harmony Double Pink (Sakata)

It's a rich rose pink with a white center and a dark eye. We were told a double anemone holds up better in the garden than singles, as they don't shed their flower petals as quickly. The series now has four colors.

Petunia SuperCal Rose, Royal Red (Sakata)

To refresh your memory, SuperCal is an interspecific hybrid of petunia and calibrachoa, giving it earliness, disease resistance, a grower-friendly habit and excellent garden performance. Think of it as a petunia version of SunPatiens, they say.



New Guinea Impatiens Roller Coaster (Dümmen Orange)

Roller Coaster Hot Pink, with its large, double, curvy-margined petals, was introduced last year. This year, five new colors join Hot Pink: Cotton Candy, Racer Red, Valraven Violet (pictured), Tangy Taffy and White Lightening. That curly edge really is different!

Dahlia Hypnotica Limoncello (Dümmen Orange)

Joining a popular series, Limoncello brings an extremely bright-yellow-and-white bloom to the group. Hypnoticas are known to be fast to finish and uniform, and this new variety matches the rest of the series.

Coleus Main Street Beale Street (Dümmen Orange)

All-America Selections award judges picked Beale Street as a national award winner for 2020—the first coleus to win an AAS award! This large-leaved red is late to flower and doesn't bleach, fleck or spot under high-heat conditions. Beale Street brings the number of varieties in the Main Street series to 16.



Begonia Vermillion Hot Pink (Beekenkamp)

This variety is a sister to Vermillion Red, which was introduced last year. Vermillion is a heimalis-type begonia with loads of rose-like double flowers. It's suited for hanging baskets and shady border use.

Begonia BIG White with Green Leaf (Benary)

The BIG series of *semperflorens* begonia gets a very important color addition: White with Green Leaf. Benary's Matt Mart called it the "holy grail" for *semperflorens*. It has a slightly cupped and rippled leaf, and overall sizes up like the others. Deep Rose Bronze Leaf is also a new addition.

Catharanthus Soiree Kawaii Blueberry Kiss, Coral Reef (Suntory)

These tiny-flowered vincas have two new varieties for the series. Blueberry Kiss is a stunner, the first in the series to enter the blue spectrum of colors. And Coral Reef adds another tropical color with a more compact habit to fit a slightly different profile in the garden.

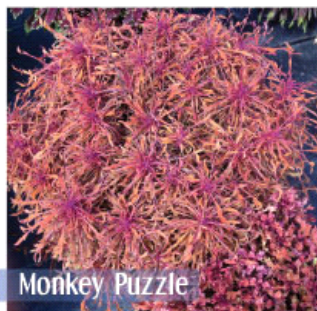
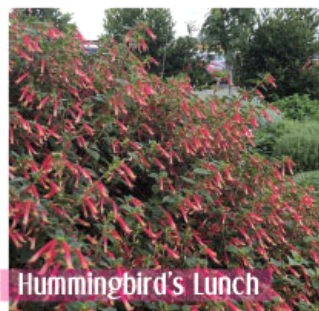
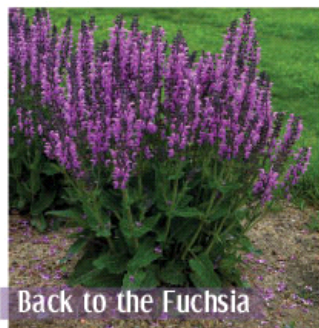


Bracteantha Granvia Gold (Suntory)

This super-sized strawflower will look amazing as a premium specimen in large patio containers or gardens.

Petunia Headliner Crystal Sky, Electric Purple Sky, and Mainstage Glacier Sky (Selecta)

Headliner Petunia (their mounding series) gets Crystal Sky—a lavender veined flower with spots—and Electric Purple Sky. Mainstage Petunia (their vigorous trailing series) gets the extra-unique Glacier Sky. It's like the original Night Sky with the addition of a white rim.



The Year of the Clever Name

This year, we give props to the product managers and marketing folks who spend hours eating pizza and drinking beer and brainstorming variety names. Here are some that tickled our collective fancies.

Petunia Splash Dance (Danziger)

Celosia Brainiac (Benary)

Coleus Le Freak (Dümmen Orange)

Pumpkin Large Marge (Sakata)

Camellia Brew-Tea-Ful (Ball Ingenuity)

Cabbage Sweet Thang (Burpee)

Petunia Pinkerbell (Dümmen Orange)

Coleus Monkey Puzzle (Terra Nova)

Salvia Color Spires Back to the Fuchsia (Proven Winners)

Cuphea Hummingbird's Lunch (PlantHaven)

Nepeta Whispurr (Darwin Perennials)