Once an exclusive exhibition for bedding plants, the California Spring Trials have evolved to include introductions of new woody ornamentals from breeders worldwide. 2015 was the year for roses, which have experienced a rebirth since the groundbreaking development of no-spray, no-prune cultivars. Here are a few innovative new varieties that promise to deliver excellent landscape performance.

**STAR ROSES AND PLANTS (FORMERLY BALL ORNAMENTALS)**

*Rosa Starlet Beauty series—Ruby, Pink, Mauve and Tangerine*

Drawing consumers in with their fully double, English-type blossoms in four available colors, the new Starlet Beauty series of climbing roses from Ball Ornamentals is sure to have stellar sell-through at retail. These small-statured climbers are a fast-growing crop for growers, quickly filling patio-sized trellises with their well-branched, shiny green foliage. Outstanding bloom performance from early summer to frost in full sun to part shade extends their shelf-life at retail and season of interest in the landscape. They’re hardy in Zones 5a to 9a, reaching 8 to 10 ft. tall at maturity.

Photo credit: Ball Horticultural Company
**HGTV HOME PLANT COLLECTION**

*Weigela florida Rosy Red Hot*

Known for their stylish and innovative ways of using plant material, HGTV HOME released an abundantly floriferous new weigela at the 2015 Spring Trials. Its true red flowers are produced at the traditional time in spring followed by copious reblooming, which is reportedly more prolific than other remontant cultivars available.

Growers and gardeners alike will appreciate that this new weigela cultivar is naturally compact, requiring no pruning to maintain its tidy, 2.5-ft. tall and wide habit. Low maintenance and long blooming—it's what people buy at retail where this variety is destined to be popular.

Photo credit: HGTV HOME Plant Collection

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**PROVEN WINNERS COLORCHOICE FLOWERING SHRUBS**

*Diervilla rivularis Kodiak Black*

Easy to grow in a wide variety of landscape situations in Zones 5a to 7b, this non-invasive selection of our native Bush Honeysuckle is a rugged beauty that adapts to grow in any amount of sunlight. It’s drought tolerant and deer resistant, too, so it’s ideal for mass plantings and naturalizing.

Kodiak Black is named for its dramatic deep purple-black foliage, which takes on vivid red tones in both spring and fall. Best color is achieved in full sun; the foliage will be greener in heavier shade. Clusters of bright yellow, bee-friendly flowers appear in early summer on 3- to 4-ft. tall, mounding plants. Though related to fragrant honeysuckle, this cultivar isn’t fragrant. Also look for Kodiak Orange, which turns glowing orange in fall.

Photo credit: Proven Winners ColorChoice Flowering Shrubs
SOUTHERN LIVING PLANT COLLECTION

Encore Azalea Autumn Fire
The newest addition to the 30-variety collection of Encore Azaleas is Autumn Fire hybridized by Buddy Lee. It boasts the richest, true red flowers of any reblooming azalea on the market, bearing the 2.5-in. semi-double blooms in spring, summer and fall in Zones 6a to 9b. They stand in stark contrast to the glossy, dark green foliage, which turns deep purplish bronze in winter. It’s naturally compact, requiring little pruning to maintain a perfectly mounded habit to 2.5-ft. tall and 3-ft. wide.

Photo credit: Southern Living Plant Collection

EUROAMERICAN PROPAGATORS

Sunbelt Roses
Catering to their large customer base in the Southern and Southwestern U.S. Zones 6 to 9, EuroAmerican has picked up a line of Kordes roses that were selected specifically for their outstanding performance in hot, humid and dry climates. All four Sunbelt roses exhibit vigorous, healthy growth and continuous bloom under such conditions. They’re highly resistant to fungal diseases and don’t require any spraying to thrive. Their size ranges from 2.5- to 3.5-ft. tall and 1.5- to 3-ft. wide depending on the cultivar.

Desmond Tutu is an award-winning floribunda rose with glamorous deep red, lightly fragrant blossoms. South Africa is a golden yellow grandiflora type with lightly fragrant flowers. Plum Perfect is an award-winning floribunda rose that bears clusters of very double, rich plum-colored blossoms. Savannah is an award-winning hybrid tea with very fragrant, fully double, light pink flowers.

Photo credit: EuroAmerican
The 2016 California Spring Trials will take place from April 9-14. Be sure to tune in to Chris, Jen and Ellen’s extensive and entertaining coverage as they travel the coast. GP

Susan Martin specializes in horticultural marketing, content generation and management, working with green industry clients in trade and consumer sectors. She can be reached at gardenersuesnews@gmail.com.