

Features

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Spring Trials: Whatcha Got for Us Now?

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The three Bobbleheads—Chris Beytes, Jen Zurko and I—have been around the block a time or two when it comes to the California Spring Trials. We've learned what to pay attention to in order to highlight the new varieties that will boost your bottom line.

What stuck in our minds? We saw a resurgence in retro plants—platycodon, for example—and a number of new intros in fuchsias. As for the predominant color, it really was a rainbow display this year.

What you see on the following pages are the annuals and edibles that are not just new, but also noteworthy. We're bringing you, the retailer, the items that will excel at indie retail. Because only you know how to promote it best.

Stay tuned for the August issue of GrowerTalks, where we'll dish on perennials, shrubs and things that piqued our interest during the 2018 California Spring Trials!

Ideal for IGCs



Pop Star platycodon & Elise lewisia series (Benary)—Old-fashioned things are finding favor again, and so are Benary's latest versions of classic pot and garden plants. Pop Star platycodon's three colors and Elise lewisia's two colors and a mix give customers lots of choices for simple yet stylish plantings. Pictured are the Elise Mix and Pop Star Blue.

Portofino l'conia begonia (Dümmen)—l'conia is Dümmen's hybrid begonia series, and the Portofinos are a subseries within that group. These are dark-leaved begonias with their large flowers held above the foliage. They have a rounded, mounding habit and also have some heat resistance. Perfect big-ticket item for retail.



Marineland Frosty Lavender lobularia (Green Fuse Botanicals)—The “Frosty” moniker indicates this lobularia has white-tinged leaves (otherwise known as variegation). These plants don’t get as big as others in the Marineland series but just look at the color.

Rising Sun Chestnut Gold rudbeckia (Green Fuse Botanicals)—This annual rudbeckia has a long flowering window—up to eight months!—meaning it will bloom on short days. And just look how pretty. A great IGC item for stores that can explain the difference.

Canary Wings begonia (Ball Ingenuity)—Canary Wings is basically the shade-loving, chartreuse version of Dragon Wing. Put it in pots no smaller than 6 in., which makes it a nice plant for IGCs. Imagine just how this lime green plant will brighten up a shady corner.

Incredible Edibles

Proven Harvest edibles from Proven Winners—As detailed in the *GrowerTalks* new series coverage (GT page 54), Proven Winners has jumped into the edibles category. They’ve released items in three categories—basil, tomatoes and strawberries—all of which have consumer appeal with disease resistance, flavor and decorative edible use, respectively.



Primero Red hot pepper (PanAmerican Seed)—Ready for harvest in just 75 days, Primero Red is the earliest habanero on the market. For the heat/spice adverse, this has just 30% of the heat in a typical habanero.

Primo Vantage cabbage (Sakata)—You’ll have no more withering heads of cabbage in your produce drawer. Sakata’s Primo Vantage produces “small framed” heads of just 4 to 4.5 lbs.

Ponchi Fa and Catch Red tomato (PRUDAC)—One of the smallest tomatoes I've ever seen is Ponchi Fa, with an upward growth habit in 3- to 4-in. pots. Catch Red is thinner than your average tomato plant with longer internodes. That's so you can see the ripening fruit through the leaves, making it a decorative item, as well. **GP**