

## Features

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### Covering the Spectrum

*Ellen C. Wells*

From the health nut (Brussels sprouts) to the fairy princess (cuphea) to the drama queen (osteospermums), Spring Trials had a variety or two for everyone that took the annual trip to sight-see new intros. It was a good year for small-scale “new,” whether that “new” were brand-new collections of small plants (alpines) or one-offs of interesting plants (mandevilla). You could say, even, that this was the Year of the Component Plant, as a lot of the new varieties play quite well with others.

The following pages include a smattering of the highlights for new vegetable and annual varieties (and one perennial collection) with which independent retailers could work their magic. This coverage is commentary and consists of the varieties that caught the eyes of us editors as we toured each breeder's display. What you may find of interest could be completely different. Make the trip to Trials next spring to see for yourself which new plants are headed for your own production and sale benches.

#### Stay Tuned!

*GrowerTalks* will have continuing coverage of Spring Trials in the August issue and will feature perennials, shrubs and any loose change we find in the cushions.



## Eat These Plants

**Brussel Sprouts Redarling (Burpee)**—If Brussels sprouts are the new kale, then Redarling would be the Red Russian version of the trendy veg. With reddish-purple stems and leaves, Redarling will add color to the garden, and to the dinner and salad plate. Like red cabbage, Redarling's 1-in. sprouts are slightly sweeter than its green counterparts.

**Herb-a-Licious combos (Darwin Perennials)**—The six different combo containers contain culinary and utilitarian herb varieties, making these pots not just pretty, but also useful. The Back Patio Sips combo has herbs to create beverages, for example, and the Buzz Off combo has herbs that deter mosquitoes. From the baker to the griller, there's a combo for most folks who spend time outside.

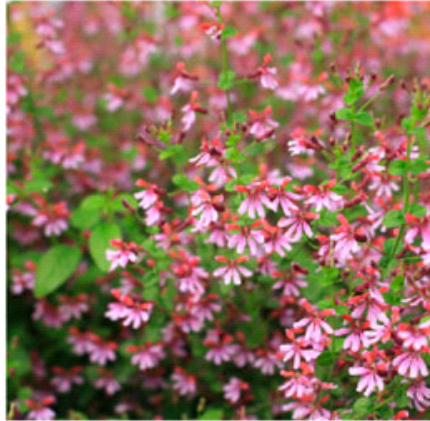
**Basil Everleaf Emerald Towers (PanAmerican Seed)**—With short internodes and a well-branching habit, this basil towers above the other varieties at retail (24 to 36 in.). It flowers 10 to 12 weeks later than other varieties, meaning it's harvestable later into the season and with a large yield. Use it in the ground or in containers.

**Watermelon Eclipse (Sakata)**—Eclipse is a bright-red fleshed, "icebox-sized" variety, meaning it's small and less than about 10 lbs. Harvestable within 80 days, Eclipse is crisp and high in sugar and, importantly, holds that sweet flavor a long time. It's seedless and will have to be planted with a seeded watermelon to help with pollination.

**Tomato Goodhearted and Pepper Fire Away Hot & Heavy (Proven Winners)**—The Proven Harvest line of veggies is in just its second year and so far it has quite a few varieties. This year, Proven Winners added its first pepper, a jalapeño-type variety called Fire Away Hot & Heavy. It has a "smooth heat," they claim, with 2- to 3-in. fruits. The plant is sized for patio planters. The new Goodhearted Tomato is also a container or basket item, producing a ton of heart-shaped, cocktail-sized fruits on plants that grow to about a foot tall. Sweet fruit, too!

**Vietnamese Coriander (Hishtil)**—Also known as Vietnamese mint, Vietnamese cilantro, laksa leaf and by a few other names, this herb is popular in Southeast Asian cooking. If it looks a lot like the common weed Lady's Thumb or Smartweed, that's because it's in the same genus. This one is *Persicaria odorata*.

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## Ideal for Indies

**Osteospermum Zion Purple Sun (Selecta One)**—With a tequila sunrise-esque coloration, Zion Purple Sun transitions through several shades of orange and into a ring of purple around the eye. Plants are well-branched and mounded with large, eye-appealing flowers.

**Cuphea Pink Shimmer (PanAmerican Seed)**—One of my picks of the Trials, this cuphea has a pink cloud of blooms with nary a flower out of place. It's a reblooming variety that doesn't require deadheading and looks great even under very hot conditions.

**Fleur de Rock Alpine Collection (Dümmen Orange)**—This collection of small-production rock garden/alpine perennials bring color to customers looking for tough, compact and interesting plants for a low-maintenance, rocky garden. The collection includes two delosperma series—Rock Crystal (six colors and a bit larger) and Solstice (four colors and a big lower-growing)—iberis, saxifraga and aubrietia.

**Mandevilla Madinia Maximo (Syngenta)**—Imagine the container combos you could create with Madinia Maximo Light Pink! As a real climbing variety, this mandevilla can also be used to create colorful plant privacy walls and dividers. Large flowers pop with color against glossy green leaves.

**Calibrachoa Superbells Blackcurrent Punch, Double Blue, Double Amber and Double Orange (Proven Winners)**—Looking for more calibrachoa colors for mixed containers? Proven Winners has options! Blackcurrent Punch replaces Blackberry Punch with larger flowers, a darker center and denser habit. The doubles are new and essential colors in the Superbells Double line. Oh, the possibilities!

**Bidens Taka Tuka (Benary+)**—It was the year of the bidens at Trials this year. Seems like every breeder had at least one. My favorites were the two new varieties in the Taka Tuka series found at Benary+. Red Glow has a fire-orange hue, while Red Yellow Center has glowing yellow brush-stroked centers. Both have large flowers. By the way, Taka Tuka is where Pippy Longstocking's father lived. **GP**