

Cover Story

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New Varieties Aren't Cancelled!

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To say 2020 has been an unusual year would win you a cruise with Captain Obvious—when we're all again permitted to travel on a ship with thousands of people, that is. While everyone was preparing to make their umpteenth trip to the California Spring Trials, the shock of the CAST cancellation was quickly replaced with ingenious ideas for how to spread new variety news far and wide.

In a year that's so abnormal, it wasn't all that odd or difficult to get a firm handle on what new plants the breeding companies had to introduce this year: Zoom. Webinars. Dropbox drop-offs. We found ways to make it work and didn't even have to switch time zones (although the warm California weather would have been a perk).

Here are just a few of the new varieties that we felt would do garden retailers well to consider prior to booking. There are quite a few good ones and there are all quite lovely. Just don't ask us how they smell.

Herbs and Veg and Tea, Oh My!



Tomato Gold Spark (Sakata)—This grape-type tomato is early to harvest, has high yields and is crack-resistant despite being sweet—two traits not usually found together. Plus, you can't beat that golden-yellow color.

Pepper Armageddon (Burpee)—Hot peppers are hot right now. Armageddon is the first F1 super-hot pepper on the market. How hot? 1.3 million Scoville units. Quick—give me a glass of milk big enough to dive in!

Kitchen Minis Tomato Siam (PanAmerican Seed)—No garden? No problem! That's basically the tagline for the new Kitchen Minis program of veggies that consumers can grow on a sunny countertop or windowsill and are complete with fruit on the plant at point of sale. The first variety within the program is the tomato Siam, a sweet and tangy cherry that's just 7- to 9-in. tall with a 10- to 12-in. spread.



Basil Coldasil (Hishtil)—Customers are constantly planting basil outside when it's barely 55F and end up with delayed growth and generally cranky plants. Coldasil could remedy the cranky. It's less sensitive to cold and able to tolerate temperatures around 50F. Send me a whole flat!

Tea Brew-Tea-Ful (Ball Ingenuity)—When have we seen *Camellia sinensis* at Trials before? Brew-Tea-Ful isn't just a pretty potted plant—you can make tea from it. The first full-sun camelia on the North American market, you can make five different types of tea from this one plant. It's Zone 7, so make sure customers know to bring inside during cold weather.

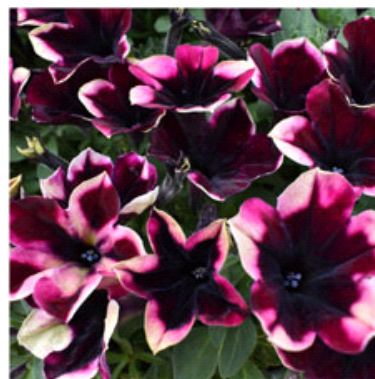
Broccoli Godzilla (Sakata)—Those who love broccoli spend a fair amount of time peeling the stems to sauté. Godzilla's stems don't need much peeling away of the woody outer skin—they're basically chop-and-roast ready. Plus, it's called Godzilla for a reason—the heads are ginormous.

Ideal for Indies



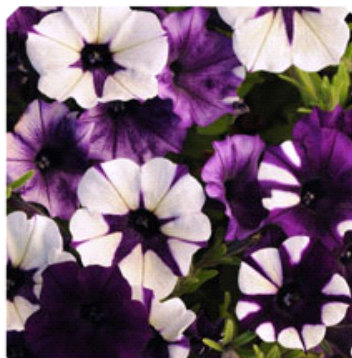
Colocasia Coffee Cups and Heart of the Jungle (Proven Winners)—The first colocasias from Proven Winners were first in their Proven Selections collection. The first is Coffee Cups, thusly named due to its cup-shaped leaves and mocha highlights on its olive-green leaves. Use it as a thriller in big combos—it gets 36 to 60 inches in height and spread. The second is Heart of the Jungle colocasia. It's similar in habit to Coffee Cups, but with non-cupped, heart-shaped, dark green leaves and black stems.

Cuphea Blackberry Sparkler (PlantHaven)—Its flowers literally look as though sparkling water was floated on top of a tall, cool glass of blackberry juice! It's perfect for smaller containers and can take some drought. Hang it and watch the pollinators visit!



Cyperus Cleopatra (Kientzler)—Cleopatra is a “thriller” grass-like plant that stays smaller than other cyperus. Its beauty is in production—stick the URC in the center of a combo planter along with other varieties and grow them all together. Ready in four weeks

Petunia Crazytunia Peach Bellini and Blackberry Jam (Westhoff)—The crazy-good Crazytunia colors keep coming. This time, they’ve come up with Crazytunia Peach Bellini (the orange coloration is from traditional breeding techniques) and Blackberry Jam, which never loses its black eye. There are now 50 or more colors in the Crazytunia line.



Petunia Amore Heart & Soul (Danziger)—Danziger’s novelty petunia line with heart-shaped patterns on each bloom, Amore Heart & Soul is an upgrade to Amore Fiesta. The yellow is softer, the burgundy deeper with cleaner lines between the two. Nice for custom containers.

Petunia Shock Wave Purple Tie-Dye (PanAmerican Seed)—This spreading petunia with the white-and-purplish blue flowers lives up to the Wave reputation, as it’s already met with favor by both retailers and consumers. Temperatures, light and PGRs influence the white/purple/blue patterning.

Calibrachoa Superbells Coral Sun (Proven Winners)—The Superbells series of calibrachoa gets an outstanding addition with Coral Sun. A yellow center transitions to a darker peach outer ring, making it an eye-pleasing bicolor. You’ll easily incorporate this into customer container mixes.

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.