

Cover Story

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The Art of the Pitch

Jennifer Polanz

On the *GrowerTalks* side, we've been running the culture guide to new varieties for many years. In the last few years, though, we decided on this side of the publication that we should help retailers better understand how to sell these new intros. And thus, this feature was born. We asked breeders to tell us the benefits of these new intros to the end consumer so your team can hit the ground running this spring.



Echinacea Artisan Collection—PanAmerican Seed

PanAmerican Seed's Kieft Seed perennials division is excited to introduce the first F1 hybrids in seed echinacea with individual colors. Soft Orange and Red Ombre are part of the award-winning Artisan Collection, and offer exceptional overwintering (Zones 4a to 10b) and fuller, well-branched plants, which means more flowers per plant in the garden.

Echinacea remains a popular North American perennial and attracts insects, butterflies and a great selection of birds for added garden wildlife interest. The two debuting colors for 2021 open in shades of deep orange or red, and then soften as they mature for a multi-color effect.

—Jerry Gorchels, *Regional Account Manager*

Begonia Groovy Series—Benary

Many retailers say this year has brought more “novice” gardeners to their doors than any year in recent memory. These new customers have had success growing vegetables in their Victory Gardens and soon will be looking for

something new and fun to try next year. Groovy Begonias are the perfect choice to entice these novice gardeners. Begonia Groovy Series is a new compact series of boliviensis begonias with bold color that's super easy to grow. They're low maintenance, once established, so even the most novice gardener can be an instant success.

Groovy Begonias thrive in full sun to partial shade with just moderate fertilization and about an inch of water per week. Their mounded, semi-trailing habit makes Groovy perfect for premium hanging baskets or patio pots of any size. Huge, novel flowers and shorter internodes create a dense waterfall of color in any shady area. Begonia Groovy Series is available in five vivid colors: Orange, Red, Rose (pictured), White and Mellow Yellow (pictured).

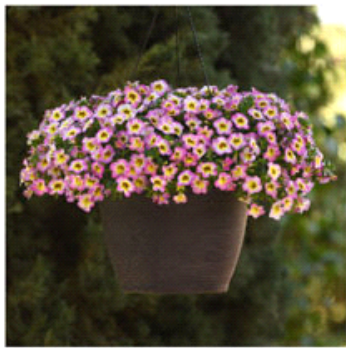
—Jen Calhoun, Marketing Specialist North America

***Sorghastrum nutans* Golden Sunset—Emerald Coast Growers**

Golden Sunset offers gardeners a glimpse of the new horizon for grasses, when garden performance and ornamental beauty come together perfectly. Where other sorghastrums are open, more natural and airy, Golden Sunset stays tighter and more upright. This beauty keeps its form well for an impressive column look, almost like Karl Foerster. Blooms also stay tighter above the foliage, adding to the lovely columnal look.

But perhaps the biggest appeal comes from the dawn of Golden Sunset's burnished gold blooms—appearing earlier than any other. Where typical sorghastrums won't flower until late summer to fall, this variety starts blooming in late spring to early summer—easily two to four weeks before other varieties. So tell your customers they don't have to wait for the wow.

—Shannon Ballard, New Plant Manager/Plant Purchaser



Surfinia Sweethearts Combo—Suntory Flowers

Two hearts beat as one as Surfinia Sweethearts, a new Suntory Mixer combo that pairs two new petunias—Surfinia Purple Heart and Heartbeat Improved. Both varieties produce smaller white flowers with a pattern of five hearts. While Purple Heart is dark purple, Heartbeat is a soft pink. Plant habits are more compact than classic Surfinia Petunias. Hanging baskets and plantings held up nicely in the recent summer trials.

Imagine a retail display with Surfinia Sweethearts baskets and planters, and coordinating 4-in. pots of the two varieties separately—perfect gifts for mom for Mother's Day. Purple Heart also lends itself to patriotic promotions for Memorial Day. Proceeds could support a local veterans service organization. Or maybe veterans get a free Purple Heart plant Memorial Day Weekend. Use your creativity to show customers love and appreciation. Free, downloadable posters will be available in 2021, along with an assortment of bench cards.

—Delilah Onofrey, Marketing Director

Calibrachoa Cha-Cha—Ball FloraPlant

Large-size, floriferous hanging baskets are in high demand and the new calibrachoa series from Ball FloraPlant delivers the vigor. Cha-Cha is 25% more vigorous than its popular Cabaret series of uniform calibrachoa and the new series is marked by novel varieties that are sure to appeal to today's shopper.

The "Divas," Diva Hot Pink (pictured) and Diva Apricot, are color-shifting types and they fill large baskets with cascading blooms—a great way to add colorful décor to outdoor living spaces.

—*Tanya Carvalho, Territory Manager Canada*

Lavender Primavera—Darwin Perennials

Everyone is living the "lavender lifestyle!" With its multi-sensory gratification, lavender is a hot-selling plant and the new Spanish Lavender Primavera gives shoppers access to plants all year long. Because of its no-chill requirement in production, Primavera can be scheduled for retail as one of the earliest vegetative lavenders on the market.

But it's the ever-blooming garden performance that really makes it stand out. Consumers can enjoy the large burgundy flags from spring right through the heat of summer, making it a purchase or gift opportunity for Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Fourth of July and beyond.

—*Karl Batschke, Global Product Manager*



Spreading Seed Petunias—Syngenta Flowers

Spreading petunias from seed offers many advantages to consumers, including excellent garden performance, an array of striking colors and unique habits, patterns and sizes to suit various uses. Many of these same advantages translate to benefits for the greenhouse grower too, like compactness, earliness to flower, series uniformity from color to color—all making them easy to manage on their journey to retail and gardens across the world. Petunias continue to be one of the most popular flowers for gardeners in North America and Syngenta Flowers works to improve this experience at every level.

For Syngenta Flowers, spreading seed petunias are a core area of focus for our breeders, with constant improvements being made to quality attributes and the spectrum of color, habit and overall appeal. Our recent introductions of new series FotoFinish and Flash Forward host advantages for the flower community—from brokers and growers onto retailers and gardeners. Recently, the new Skybox spreading petunia wowed the industry with its

incredibly large flowers and its attractive starred pattern, a type of petunia totally new to consumers for baskets and containers.

—*Olivia Sellards, Customer Marketing Manager*