

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Landscape Success with Vegetative Inputs

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Pictured: There's a clear vigor and flower coverage difference between EnduraScape (left) and Superbena (right). Taken in Overton, Texas, on June 6.

For landscapers, installation success begins with plants that provide early color and fast garden fill. Oftentimes, this can be accomplished using vegetative varieties, an alternative to seed-raised varieties. The input cost is slightly higher, but the result is undeniable: better fill and bigger color impact. The upswing use of large, leafy vegetative coleus in landscape designs in recent years is one example of how landscapers are getting more bang for their buck. As breeders further understand landscapers' needs for color power and spreading habits, their efforts focus on bringing more plant solutions to market. Two new vegetative series launching this season are specifically aimed for landscape success: Bounce Interspecific Impatiens from Selecta and EnduraScape Verbena from Ball FloraPlant.

Each series provides a solution within its class, all while offering the best flower coverage, earliest color and the best vigor for landscape applications. Since we understand embracing "new" is sometimes a risky endeavor for landscapers, the breeding teams have spent months trialing both series with landscape growers and landscape contractors in order to offer helpful best practices to guarantee success. In addition, peer experiences provide a case study look into growing and installing the best vegetative landscapes possible.

Bounce Interspecific Impatiens

Landscapers can replace their seed *I. walleriana* with this new series of interspecific impatiens. Its resistance to downy mildew means it can be planted with confidence, all while offering tons of color and the flower count of classic garden impatiens.

Some best practices for a healthy start to Bounce impatiens propagation are:

- Don't pinch. Bounce are naturally self-branching. Pinching will actually delay flowering by 10 to 14 days.
- Grow cool. Lower temperatures reduce PGR needs and help control growth. Bonzi applied as a 1 to 2 ppm spray after sticking will also decrease stem stretch.
- Manage light. Plants grow best under moderate light intensity, ideally 4,000 to 6,000 f.c. (40,000 to 60,000 Lux). Bounce is daylength neutral and will flower year-round.
- Limit P and NH₃-N. Excessive phosphorous and ammoniacal nitrogen will promote unwanted vegetative growth. Provide both in limited quantities, but do include calcium in your feed.

John Gerace at Welby Gardens in Denver says his landscape customers didn't spec any *I. walleriana* this year due to downy mildew outbreaks. Coleus and begonia provided most of the replacement numbers, but their limited color palette meant a solution was still needed. When he trialed Bounce this year, John was upbeat about their use for his landscape customers. The plants rooted easily in week 12, transplanted week 16 and were scheduled to ship week 21. He commented on how they came into flower earlier than their New Guinea Impatiens crop—and Bounce offered a much wider color array to meet his customers' needs.

His only drawback? He wants more mixes! So the Selecta team suggests starting with these similar-habit Bounce for great-looking combos:

- Bounce Violet and Bounce Pink Flame
- Big Bounce Lavender and Big Bounce White

Jim Curd at Clesen Wholesale in Evanston, Illinois, was impressed by Bounce's branching—even with the tight space he gave them during trials.

"From a grower perspective, not being able to space the plants and still have such good branching shows that it's a solid plant," he said.

"I like it because it branches really low," said Wendy Robinson, Armstrong Growers in San Juan Capistrano, California. "Bounce is conducive to offering a similar look and feel of *walleriana* types."

She found Bounce had a better response to cooler growing conditions and it required less space without getting "leafy" before popping into color.

"Flower cover is the most important thing for our customers, so the earlier a series is to bloom, the better," Wendy said. "It has to flower before it ships."

For landscapers, two other traits of Bounce Interspecific Impatiens help make their landscape designs successful: the series is absolutely tolerant of beds placed in full sun, and true to its name, the plant "bounces back" from severe wilt without loss to blooms or buds. The Trial Gardens at the South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station put this to the test during July with temperatures into the 90s. The plants, placed in full sun on drip irrigation, bounced back from deep wilt with a full recovery, and were showcased in the Trial Gardens' "Highlights" newsletter.

EnduraScape Verbena

Contractors looking for a hardy landscape verbena that withstands the smoldering heat of summer and won't

cycle out of color will want to try the EnduraScape series. Not only does it withstand temperatures climbing over 100, it's cool hardy to the low teens and reblooms in the Spring—an excellent choice for Southern markets. This cold tolerance is a big benefit to growers as well. Production can take place outdoors, without a concern for light frost or unpredictable temperature swings early in the season.

Jones Greenhouse in Lamar, Mississippi, received its trial of EnduraScape, grew it outdoors in 4-in. pots in trays of 10 and then had an unexpected dip in night temperatures.

“They were able to withstand at least five straight nights into the 20s with no damage to the plants and the new growth was not stunted,” owner Chris Jones told us. Putting EnduraScape’s claim to the test is important for him and his landscape customers. He knows they’re searching for weather tolerance, long-lasting color and low maintenance.

In terms of vigor, Chris says that was the first thing he noticed. The difference in habit compared to Superbena was clearly visible: EnduraScape had double-size leaves and a much larger spread. His close spacing lead to some stretch, but it wasn’t necessarily a negative. In fact, Chris found it a better comparison for Homestead Purple. EnduraScape Red was particularly called out for its impressive habit.

Ray Mason of Emma’s Garden Growers in Mattituck, New York, liked the intensity of the EnduraScape colors—especially the EnduraScape Red. The series is available in seven colors to satisfy many landscape design palettes. Planting varieties together in landscape beds offers great color dimension, too. Some EnduraScape habits that mix and match well are: Blue and Hot Pink; White Blush and Lavender; or Dark Purple and Lavender.

To build the perfect 4-in. pot or 1801 and to get the best vigor and earliest color for delivery to the landscaper, Ball FloraPlant product managers recommend the following best practices:

- Control stretch. In the liner stage, a second pinch or shear will build better basal branching into the plant. Vigorous colors require an early PGR drench, otherwise, a shear to the edge of the pot is needed to control habit.
- Color-specific PGRs. Vigorous colors respond to 2 ppm Bonzi drench (1 to 2 applications, with first application 5 to 7 days after transplant). Red is less vigorous and responds to 2,500 ppm B-Nine tank mix with 750 ppm Cycocel (1 to 2 applications, with first application made 5 to 7 days after transplant).
- Choose wisely. One Bonzi drench is usually enough to finish vigorous EnduraScape colors. B-Nine and Cycocel are usually not strong enough to tame the plants in small pots. For Red, 1 to 2 applications of B-Nine 2,500 ppm tank mix with Cycocel 750 ppm offers enough control, while Bonzi and Sumagic drenches are generally too strong for this color.

Now you know the facts and feedback. We hope you trial Bounce and EnduraScape to great success. **GT**

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