

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Just Our Cup of Tea

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Editors Ellen Wells and Jennifer Zurko focus their attention (and their cameras) on *Heuchera Little Cutie Shimmer*, one of two new heucheras shown to us by Terra Nova Nurseries at the California Spring Trials this year. Larry Finley told us the Zone 4 perennial grows to just 6- to 8-in. tall, with a 12-in. spread. It's ideal for mixed containers, rock gardens and fairy gardens.

Terra Nova, which set up shop at the Pacific Plug & Liner stop in Watsonville, was one of 47 plant companies participating at the 2019 Spring Trials, held March 22-27—early by traditional Trials standards. A dozen or so pot, media, chemical and equipment suppliers were also vying for the attention of attendees at the 15 stops.

GrowerTalks and *Green Profit* provided six days of written and video coverage from the road (which can be viewed at www.springtrials.com). Our takeaway? It was a quiet year for introductions, with PanAmerican Seed and

Syngenta taking top prize in the innovation category (metaphorically speaking—there are no actual prizes) for their Impatiens Downy Mildew-resistant impatiens series. One such series would be amazing; to have two introduced the same year is proof that bedding plant breeders are hard at work on your behalf. It's not to say there weren't loads of worthy series and color additions; it's just that without comparison trials, they're difficult to judge as "better" than the competition or even "different."

The number of visitors traveling the coast appeared to be down by 100 or so from the typical 1,100 to 1,200. That's due primarily to fewer big box representatives and their entourage of growers, since both Home Depot and Lowe's now have their own new varieties events earlier in the year. We heard Walmart didn't attend this year, either.

That said, trial hosts had mostly favorable things to say about the event. PanAmerican Seed's Anne Leventry liked that it was more grower and distributor focused, "which is what I consider the primary audience to be anyway."

Green Fuse Botanicals' Steve Jones said they had a great show. "Our attendance was up quite a bit, perhaps 20%-plus." His biggest challenge was that nearly half their visitors hit on one day, Saturday, the opening day of the event. "I wonder why people don't phase their travel accordingly," he asked. "Say, starting on Sunday?"

Benary attendance was also up, by 15%, with visitors coming from more than 40 countries. "We were very happy with the event," said co-managing director Matthias Redlefsen. He had no issues with the late March timing of the event, either.

"If we breeders don't get the plants to flower in time, how dare we expect our customers to do it?" **GT**