

GROWERTALKS

Cover Story

10/1/2019

Singing Their Praises

Ellen C. Wells

What's the surest way to sell these sparkly new varieties to the average IGC shopper? Describing their benefits in the garden, that's how. What makes these varieties special? Maybe it's the boost from genetics. Maybe it's how pollinators go ga-ga from them. Maybe it's a perennial being in flower at the right time to promote sales. Whatever the variety's story, we're unveiling it to you here so you can help sing its praises to your customers.



Dümmen Orange, Geranium Big EEZE

Geraniums have always held a top-tier position in bedding plants sales, and the iconic zonal geranium is something with which gardeners around the globe are very familiar. Interspecific breeding changed the industry when hybridizers were able to cross ivy types with zonals, creating a large, full-flowered plant with the extra heat tolerance for which ivy geraniums were known. However, while these geraniums had far better garden performance, they looked different than the traditional types gardeners were used to. Big EEZE came in as the first interspecific series to have the benefits of the zonal x ivy cross, but with a much more traditional look with an upright mounded habit and huge flower umbels. In the garden center, this means consumers will feel more confident with their purchase, being a plant they're familiar with, but having the extra boost "behind the scenes" with that ivy blood, giving them much better success throughout the summer.

—Lindsay Pangborn, Marketing Manager, Dümmen Orange

Green Fuse Botanicals, Rudbeckia Rising Sun Chestnut Gold

We are fortunate enough to live in a time when thousands of plant genera are readily available for finishing and

purchasing at the retail level. As plant breeders, it is also a time that becomes increasingly difficult to bring to market a plant that has clearly advantageous attributes. Rising Sun Chestnut Gold is an industry changer, as it completely revolutionizes one of the most popular plants in North America. *Rudbeckia hirta* has been locked down to fall sales due to day length requirements. While it still maintains phenomenal sell through, what happens when this easily recognizable plant hits the market in spring when parking lots are full? Chestnut Gold will be in full flower any time of year without any special grower or consumer protocol, giving customers an entire season of enjoying the five to six bicolored blossoms rather than just a few weeks. In the container, garden or as a cut flower, Rising Sun Chestnut Gold is a wide-ranging must for every gardener!

—Jim Devereux, *Green Fuse Botanicals*

Danziger, New Guinea Impatiens Sun Harmony series

When the time came to take on New Guinea Impatiens breeding, Danziger set out to reinvent the category. The result was Sun Harmony, a beautiful, color-saturated New Guinea series that performs well in sun and in shade.

The name “Harmony” reflects how well the series performs together. All Sun Harmony varieties (Blushing Orchid, pictured) offer a uniform habit and uniform flower timing, assuring stunning retail displays. The large flower size and bold bloom colors really capture customers’ attention. Best of all, Sun Harmony takes the guess work out of planting. Home gardeners can plant it in sun or shade and still have success.

—Lisa Heredia, *Marketing and Key Accounts, Danziger*



Proven Winners, Salvia Rockin’ Blue Suede Shoes

Your customers’ desire to have plants that “are beyond pretty” is not going away anytime soon. They want to also nurture the bees, butterflies and hummingbirds in their backyard, and plant selection plays a big role in accomplishing this goal. When you’re looking for bulletproof plants that are pollinator magnets, you can’t overlook the power of Salvia!

Three years ago Proven Winners introduced a new series called Rockin’ Salvia from breeder Brent Barnes. Brent’s varieties are an interspecific *S. guaranitica*, which are different from many of the annual salvia plants on the market today. The newest color, Rockin’ Blue Suede Shoes is very unique and eye-catching—think plumbago blue with black calyxes!

These beauties are tough summer-long performers and are proving to be the first plant a hummingbird will visit in a garden. They’re perfect for the landscape or large mixed containers and guaranteed to be a hit with both consumers and pollinators this spring, and in years to come.

—Jessica DeGraaf, *Retail Account Manager, Proven Winners*

Terra Nova, Begonia Silver Treasure

Begonia Silver Treasure is an impressive variety in more ways than one. The annual's wavy, silver and pink foliage wowed attendees at Cultivate'19, ultimately becoming the most popular and commented on variety at the show for Terra Nova Nurseries. In addition, Begonia Silver Treasure is Terra Nova's best branched begonia by far, and maintains its unique appearance even in temperatures nearing the 32°F mark.

In the creation of Begonia Silver Treasure, parent seeds on both sides of the cross had good characteristics, but divergent chromosome numbers, making the cross more difficult. Out of roughly 1,000 seeds, approximately 50 were germinated. From the 100 seeds that were sown, only two selections were produced, one of them being Begonia Silver Treasure.

—*Chuck Pavlich, director of new product development, Terra Nova*

Ball Ingenuity, Zinnia Zesty

We know your regular garden customers are happy to play outside. But how do you help them encourage their children or grandchildren to unplug and join them in the garden? Give them family-friendly, multi-purpose choices in your store! Double-flowered zinnias are an instantly recognizable flower amongst children (even if they don't know what they're called). The new Zesty series of zinnia from PanAmerican Seed is a super-colorful way to entice people of all ages to enjoy the outdoors. Its "fluffy" blossoms are the perfect landing pad for butterflies, and its height (24 in.) and excellent branching gives them decent stem length for impromptu backyard bouquets. The series has had recent media exposure by HGTV.com, which listed it as a top plant for family-friendly backyards. Make sure you have plenty on-hand next spring.

—*Claire Josephson, Product Marketing Manager, PanAmerican Seed*

Darwin Perennials, Nepeta Blue Prelude

The new Nepeta Blue Prelude is a completely different kind of nepeta hybrid. It has *N. subsessilis* characteristics, which means it gets very large, blue flowers continuing all the way up its stem. Nepeta is a natural pollinator plant—a must-have for gardeners looking to attract beneficial bugs to the garden, while repelling other pests and diseases with its minty-scented foliage. A great selling point of Blue Prelude is that it stays nicely contained in its pot while at retail—it won't tangle on the display bench—but once a gardener gets it home, it will scale up nicely to about 3 ft. tall. This produces a WOW in the garden for homeowners looking to fill a landscape space with color and attraction.

—*Chris Fifo, Product Representative, Darwin Perennials*

GP