

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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All In for Next Year's Varieties

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This family was part of the more than 500 attendees at Welby Gardens' annual trials and open house, which was part of "Colorado Destination Week." On August 8 and 9, growers, retailers, brokers and breeders (and yours truly) were hosted by four local trials sites: Colorado State University, the Denver Botanic Garden, Blooma Farms and Welby.

Welby's trials always have a theme that they carry through the year in their marketing materials, but this year's "Casino Night" theme was a bit more memorable because they were also celebrating their 75th anniversary in the plant business.

Now run by the third and fourth generation of the Gerace family, Welby has been conducting trials since the 1990s, moving inside as a fully container trial when they moved to their current location in 2006.

Trials Manager Dan Gerace said there were over 825 varieties in this year's trials. Nick Gerace said the trials are set up so that their customers—who are primarily IGCs and landscapers—can see all the new varieties to help them make decisions on what they want to include next year.

"They see them early, so they get an advantage," said Nick's dad, Marty.

The trials aren't a one-and-done event—from what the breeders provide, Welby creates a "trials package" that they offer their customers to help them make their own in-store displays with the newest plants. Marty said some customers buy the package two or three times as they sell through during the spring.



When you walked into the trials, one of the first things you saw was a special display featuring a beautiful bicolor dahlia called Miss Mandy in honor of Mandy Gerace. Mandy passed away in early February too soon at the age of 46, and to celebrate her memory, Syngenta has named a dahlia after her. Mandy grew up at Welby in the family business and was working as an account manager for Syngenta when she passed.

"That dahlia was named in honor of Mandy and all she had contributed to our industry," said Syngenta's Melanie Fernandes. **GT**

Pictured right: The Welby staff does all of their own decorations for the event, including this impressive dice display.

Pictured below: Syngenta's Melanie Fernandes really got into the casino night theme by dressing up as an old lady who looks like she spends her Social Security checks on the slot machines.

