

GROWERTALKS

Guest Column

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Pretty Little Geraniums

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Plant breeding, that patient marriage of science and hope, occasionally produces a variety that ignores the original assignment. Breeders typically work toward specific goals: improved vigor, better branching, disease resistance, larger flowers or enhanced color patterns.

Once in a while, a new seedling arrives unexpectedly mid-course. Such is the serendipitous story behind Syngenta's Pretty Little Geranium series. And, like other chance discoveries, it took geraniums down an unexplored path.

Left: A crop of Pretty Little Pink Splash grown in the bread-and-butter size. Color is just entering prime.

What emerged was not the familiar geranium that has decorated American porches and garden beds for generations. It lacked the large, rounded flower heads that have long served as the category's visual shorthand. Instead, Pretty Little carried itself differently. The flowers floated just above the foliage and beneath each bloom lurked a small army of successors—buds upon buds waiting their turn.

Where many geraniums might carry just a handful of three to five buds behind the first flower, Pretty Little often displays twice that number. The result is a plant determined to flower whenever possible.

Consumers may not be familiar with the term multibloom, but they understand its implication immediately. Standing before a retail bench, they perform the small acts of judgment that gardeners have always performed. They compare. They inspect. They imagine the future of their garden.

- One plant is flowering now.
- Another appears prepared to flower for weeks.

The second plant usually wins. Flower density quickly became the defining characteristic of the Pretty Little series. Plants provide strong color coverage at retail while simultaneously displaying a visible pipeline of future blooms.

Time and place do count

The challenge for Syngenta is determining exactly where the plant fits into the marketplace. Although technically a geranium, Pretty Little doesn't perform the same role as a traditional landscaping geranium. Its compact habit, dense flowering and continuous color make it ideally suited for smaller decorative applications.



Right: The strong red eye of Pretty Little White Splash is visible from a long distance.

This is a geranium well qualified for 6-in. pot production. That market requires compact, color-rich products serving multiple roles in gardens, baskets and pottery. Lots of genera do just that—petunias, calibrachoas, begonias and pentas, for example. Now geraniums can fill the same role thanks to the Pretty Little series. These plants fill a shop-n-drop basket or container just as nicely as they line a front border or walkway.

Size is not the only reason. Production timing allows Pretty Little to sell earlier, as well. Plants flower approximately two weeks before traditional geraniums and growers can finish them alongside other six-week crops.

In fact, they can be ready in time for Mother's Day, and the big planting months of May and June. Their trigger for blooming is light accumulation, not daylength. As long as the plant racks up enough total light intensity, flowers will fire off. For most of North America, this naturally occurs south of the Great Lakes. New York State is a conversation—Long Island is fine, but Albany might need a little photosynthetic lighting. Shipping week is key and you need to count backward.

Summer performance follows the geranium script. High summer heat does suppress flowering and thunderstorms can bash them about. Visually, the display ebbs and flows, but it never goes out of color.

Growers who have the most success with this product put it in their spring container programs in some form or fashion—either as a stand-alone specimen or inside a mix. Progressives push it into containers a little out of the ordinary to showcase its abilities. Window box decor is a good example of this trend.



Pretty Little new one

The series took an important step forward in 2026 with the introduction of Pretty Little White Splash, the first true companion variety to Pink Splash. For Syngenta, the new introduction represented more than simply adding another color. It effectively created a second launch for the entire concept.

Left: Placed in a larger pot, you can see Pretty Little's tiered approach to color, like a layer cake with frosting.

Displayed together, the duo create an eye-catching presentation that immediately draws attention. Individually, each variety offers a strong display. Combined, they tell a more complete story. Naturally contrasting colors complement one another, creating opportunities for mixed containers and coordinated displays that showcase the series' unique character.

Adding White Splash to the lineup also reinforces one of Pretty Little's greatest strengths: Its ability to stand apart in an exceptionally crowded category. Its compact form and dense flower coverage rival any of the dozens of

competing annuals. On the retail bench, Pretty Little looks fundamentally different from conventional geraniums. Yet despite its differences, the plant remains recognizably a geranium.

That balance between familiarity and novelty may explain much of its appeal. Consumers encounter something new without feeling as though they're taking a risk. The plant feels both different and familiar at the same time. It delivers the trusted performance associated with geraniums while offering a fresh appearance that stands out among more traditional selections. **GT**

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