

Fire Alarm or False Alarm? Plus, Good Impressions From Spring Trials



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- Spring Trials
- Good Impressions
- Darwin Perennials
- PP&L
- Fire Alarm or False Alarm?

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California Spring Trials



The California Spring Trials were held a couple of weeks ago at several venues throughout Central and Northern California. As you may recall, I wasn't able to attend, but my Ball Publishing colleagues, AKA the Bobbleheads, were there and provided some excellent video coverage on the [GrowerTalks YouTube channel](#) with a [2026 California Spring Trials Playlist](#).

They also provided daily updates in the [Acres of buZZ! e-newsletter](#)

For the most part, the Bobbleheads were my eyes and ears this year. Therefore, much of what I'll

be sharing with you today, as well as in future newsletters, is based on their observations and coverage.



Good Impressions

Before I show you some of the perennials the Bobbleheads covered, I previously mentioned that I wasn't able to attend this year and invited anyone attending to send pictures of any plants that caught their eye. Here are some plants that made good impressions with a few subscribers who were able to attend CAST.

Rudbeckia Solar Sisters



Credit: [Bloomin' Easy Plants](#)

My friends at Bloomin' Easy Plants are very excited about their recent *Rudbeckia hirta* introduction, Solar Sisters. Consider Solar Sisters a true *R. hirta* cultivar with cold hardiness in Zones 7 to 9. Therefore, it's a perennial in some places, but not in colder climates. It has eye-catching double flowers emerging bright yellow with hints of orange and aging to copper as the nights cool. Solar Sisters won a Retailer's Choice Award at Cultivate'25 and earned top performer status at the UGA Trials, as well as the Industry's Choice and People's Choice Awards at their open house.

Agapanthus Poppin' Pink



Credit: Becky Paxton

Here's another beautiful perennial for some parts of the country (hardy in Zones 8 to 11). Poppin' Pink from Plant Development Services, Inc. is part of the Southern Living and Sunset Plant Collections. This new introduction represents a color breakthrough as an all new pink reblooming agapanthus. Poppin' Pink is floriferous and compact, reaching 12- to 18-in. tall when blooming. Learn more about this new agapanthus by visiting the [Plant Development website](#).

Canna CannaSun



Credit: Beau Kneppers

Green Works International showcased its new CannaSun series of pot cannas at Spring Trials. Key noteworthy characteristics include CannaSun's multi-stemmed growing habit (above left). They fill out the pots quickly, are genetically compact (no plant growth regulators are necessary) and the series includes a whole assortment of flower and leaf colorations. Cold hardy through Zones 8 to 11.

Please contact p.wismans@lucanne.com for information on the CannaSun series in the U.S.

I'd like to thank everyone who contributed images for me to pass along. As you can see, these attendees were drawn to perennials mostly geared to warmer climates. That's okay—they're perennials in the zones listed in each variety's description. Now, how about I move along to some perennials with hardiness in colder zones?



Darwin Perennials

Hemerocallis DayScape



This year, Darwin Perennials is adding a new genus—hemerocallis—to its product line. The DayScape series bred by Greg Goff from Le Petit Jardin in Micanopy, Florida, are selected for their long-lasting flowers (each flower lasting three to four days) and resistance to daylily rust. There are nine colors in the series with each of them producing tetraploid flowers, and being dayneutral with early flowering and continuous blooms. Hardy to Zone 5a.

Helianthemum SunBurst



SunBurst Pink



SunBurst White

Unfortunately, the plants on display at the trials weren't showing their full potential, but I thought it was important to show you how wonderful these Rock Roses are. There are three colors in the Sunburst series: Red (not shown), Pink and White. They're hardy (Zone 5b), low-maintenance groundcovers that cover themselves with attractive flowers in the spring. The SunBurst series grows 8- to 12-in. mounds that are great at attracting pollinators, but not so attractive to deer. I'd consider them as underutilized perennials with potential.



Pacific Plug & Liner

Pacific Plug and Liner isn't a breeder, but they're known for propagating and offering a very wide selection of perennial plugs and liners to the industry. They're also known to offer perennials growers can't source anywhere else, as well as their quite elaborate and themed California Spring Trial exhibits. Here are a couple of promising perennials they had at CAST:

Euphorbia Miner's Berry Bordeaux

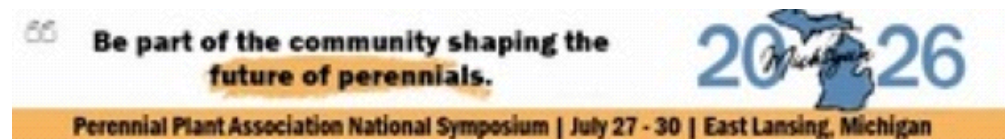


Miner's Berry Bordeaux is a striking new, hardy euphorbia introduction that offers bold seasonal color shifts and great garden performance. It emerges with deep red-burgundy foliage in the spring, forming attractive upright mounds that mature to a darker, nearly black hue in the summer. This new introduction is drought tolerant, offers deer resistance and is cold hardy to Zone 4.

Lewisia Sunset Glow



Sunset Glow is definitely an eye-catching lewisia. Some would say it steals the show with its intensely colored red flowers. It blooms continuously from late spring to early summer, takes a summer siesta and then produces a second flush from September until frost. It's drought tolerant and hardy to Zone 4.



Fire Alarm or False Alarm?

I visited with a grower this week who asked me to look at her Heuchera Fire Alarm. There were two rows of trays with each row having a different foliage appearance. Take a look:



These trays were planted at the same time several weeks ago. It was interesting to see that although there were plants with two different foliage colorations, plants with different colors weren't mixed within the same trays. There were entire trays with one leaf coloration and other trays with the other.

During our discussions we were trying to determine what was causing the trays to have a different foliage appearance:

- Were the starting materials from different sources?
- Were the starting materials the same age?
- Were the liners grown in the same environment or were some grown warmer and other trays grown cooler?
- Is fertilizer playing a role in the coloration differences?
- Are all of the plants Fire Alarm or do we have a false alarm and have two different varieties?

The grower and I are curious to hear your thoughts. Are you seeing this in your blocks of Fire Alarm? Please send your thoughts and comments to me at paul@pace49.com.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

My email is paul@pace49.com if you have any comments, article suggestions or if you'd just like to say hello.

Best regards,



Paul Pilon

Editor-at-Large—*Perennial Pulse*

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