

GROWERTALKS

Features

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Good ... and Plenty

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While Spring 2014 is going down as memorable for its molasses-slow start and hot-sauce finish, Spring Trials 2014 will be remembered for ... well, gosh, thinking back, it's hard to remember. Most attendees told us it was a quiet year by their standards.

Not that there weren't a few standout introductions (we list seven in our "Unique Intros" section), including the first calibrachoa from seed. And not that there weren't plenty of all-new series (we

counted at least 29), plus the usual hundreds of additions and improvements. Crop categories run the gamut—annuals, perennials, grasses, tropicals, veggies, herbs, fruits and woody ornamentals. Plus, exhibits by media, chemical, container and tag/POP manufacturers.

All of which makes one wonder: With so much to see, how could it NOT have been a great Spring Trials? Over a thousand attendees from around the world, untold new varieties to choose from, great weather and inspiration galore ... sounds like a recipe for a great 2015.

Here are a few of the overall trends we noted:

Veggies growing. Breeders are working overtime to catch up with the veggie trend. It now seems rare to NOT find veggies at a stop. PanAmerican Seed had 12 intros by themselves. Floranova showed a cherry tomato with 2-ft.-long trusses, aptly named Rapunzel. Sakata even introduced a collard green (called Tiger, bred for more leaf and less stem). Who ever thought we'd see collards at Spring Trials?

Fruits, too. We're used to it now, what with ABZ's strawberries. Now EuroAmerican has blueberry Indigo

Pearls. And PP&L has Hula Berry, a white strawberry that tastes like pineapple (often called a pineberry).

Perennials, shrubs and tropicals also continue to grow. Vines such as mandevilla and dipladenia are popping up everywhere. Perennials are coming from Kieft, Darwin, EuroAmerican, Green Fuse, PlantHaven, Florensis, Skagit, Terra Nova, Bartels, Takii, Proven Winners, Cultivaris, Hishtil and Benary. (If we left you out, let us know and we'll remedy that next month!)

New locations. There were no southern (San Diego-area) trials for the first time since 1997, when EuroAmerican Propagators and Paul Ecke Ranch first joined the Trials. That's also the first year the term "Spring Trials" was introduced. Suntory and EuroAmerican moved to the Ventura Botanical Gardens. Plug Connection moved to retailer Windmill Nursery in Buellton, as did most of the companies that had borrowed space from them. There were about 120 fewer miles to drive than last year, but one additional stop, for 17 total—10 in the northern region and seven in the central region.

Newcomers. Royal Van Zanten displayed at GroLink, showing pot mums, garden mums, celosia and alstroemeria. Sequoia Group, also at GroLink, is a Chinese manufacturer of ceramic pots. Oasis Grower Solutions, exhibiting at Sakata, showed their range of foam rooting cubes, fertilizers and greenhouse sanitation products and floral preservatives. PeleMix, displaying at Windmill, touts themselves as "Professionals in Coir Substrates." And Vivero International, up at Pacific Plug & Liner, is a 100-acre Mexican young plant nursery that propagates for a wide range of breeders. All told, as best as we can figure, some 62 different companies participated at Spring Trials.

Tech, social media absent. No iPads, no "Likes," no hashtags ... it was actually refreshing to not be bombarded by Trial stops attempting to look hip by using the technology du jour. Instead, the focus was on face-to-face, one-on-one interaction, of which there was plenty.

Which is what Spring Trials are all about, really.

Unique Intros

What makes an intro "unique"? We classify it as a breeding breakthrough, first-time-seen, a buzz generator ... or just all-around cool. Here's what we—and attendees—think were the unique intros of the Trials.



Kabloom Seed Calibrachoa (PanAmerican Seed)

We teased it in the April issue of *GrowerTalks* and were lucky enough to be the first members of the press to see this latest breeding innovation—a calibrachoa from seed. Side by side, nobody can tell Kabloom apart from vegetative calibrachoa, so being from seed isn't a consumer benefit. But for growers, seed means 1) a lower price point than cuttings (think Wave petunia seed pricing), 2) calibrachos on your shelf when you need them (unlike cuttings, which may or may not be available), and 3) plug planting that can be mechanized. Kabloom is being introduced in four phases, starting with nationwide trials. Pelleted seed will start shipping in September and plugs will be available soon after that. Kabloom starts off with five core colors. (Crave Orange Bicolor seed calibrachoa is more vigorous than the Kabloom series, so it's being offered as a stand-alone Ball Seed exclusive.)

Cannova Canna (Ball Ingenuity)

Cannova, offered by Ball Ingenuity but bred by Takii, is the first-ever F1 canna series (South Pacific Scarlet, also from Takii, was the first-ever F1 canna). Cannova was bred in Europe and is more compact than other cannas on the market, making it suitable for shipping on racks. Which we think means it will be a good mass market item. Being from seed, it's virus-free. And being an F1, it's early and uniform. Cannova comes in four colors.

Lucky Strike Begonia (Dümmen)

This *boliviensis*-type was a Beytes favorite because of the light peach flowers contrasting on the dark foliage, making Lucky Strike very striking! Says Chris, "Lucky Strike had the nicest plant habit of any individual specimen at any trial. It's simply a very pretty, very tidy plant. My pick item."



Bounce and Big Bounce Interspecific Impatiens (Selecta)

For those still reeling from impatiens downy mildew, Selecta offers an interspecific impatiens series that look like a New Guinea but performs more like a *walleriana*. Bounce (for smaller pots and baskets) and Big Bounce (for big pots and the landscape) are more spreading than regular New Guineas, growing out instead of up. The name comes from the plant's ability to bounce back after wilting without dropping its flowers. They're downy mildew resistant and can be grown cool (62F). We were told they do well in sun, but are really best to add color to the shade. Bounce has five colors; Big Bounce has six.

Bossa Nova F1 Interspecific Begonia (Floranova)

A cross between a *boliviensis* and another species (the Brits were mum on exactly which one), this F1 seed begonia grows full and fierce with loads of blooms. Good for hanging baskets or the landscape, the seed

offers good germination (85%+) and availability. Four different colors in the series.

African Sunset F1 Petunia (Takii)

The first F1 orange petunia from seed and an All-American Selections winner, African Sunset is mounding rather than spreading, and is good for baskets, beds and containers. The blooms turn a deeper orange color in lower light conditions.

ColorMax Viola (Sakata)

Sakata is long-renowned for their pansies, so it's noteworthy when they introduce a new viola series. And one can assume they've done their homework regarding the fierce competition in the marketplace. ColorMax is said to take the heat, so you can grow it during the summer for fall sales. But they're good for spring, too. This large-flowered series starts with 10 colors and a mix.

New Series

We counted at least 29 new series introduced at this year's Trials. Unfortunately, we don't have room to include them all. Here, in no particular order, are a baker's dozen stand-outs.



Marquee Coleus (Burpee Home Gardens)

The three colors in this new vegetative coleus series all have serrated leaves and fun Hollywood-inspired names: Red Carpet, Box Office Bronze and Blonde Bombshell.

Sundayz Gerbera (Florist)

This double-flowered outdoor gerbera from seed is more compact and last longer than other varieties, because the double flowers are less likely to be pollinated, says Florist. The plants are categorized in four different sizes: Maxi, Mini, Midi and Micro. The Mini come as one solo color, whereas the others only come as a mix.

Sundenia Dipladenia (Suntory)

A whole new class of dipladenia, Sundenia features large, mandevilla-sized flowers on a dipladenia-style plant, meaning bushy and compact, with glossy foliage. The series starts with three colors: White, Red and Coral.



Conga Calibrachoa (Ball FloraPlant)

Conga is ideal for window boxes and color bowls because of their small plant and flower size. Similar to their solid-colored Cabaret series, Conga offers novelty flower pattern and colors. Four colors: Strawberry Burst, Blush, Orange and Lemon.

Bowilia Begonia (Beekenkamp)

A *Begonia boliviensis* series that this Dutch begonia specialist says is way more compact and well-branched than competitors. It's suited for 4-in. or 5-in. pots and baskets. and comes in four colors, Red, White, Salmon and Lemon. (Note: Plug Connection is now a rooting station for all Beekenkamp varieties.)

Angelos Angelonia (PAC-Elsner)

This new series has four colors: Bicolor, Blue, Lavender Pink and White. It also includes a sub-series, Angelos Trailing that, well, trails. It comes in White, Pink and Blue.



Lazy Daze and Sun Daze Portulaca (Floranova)

Two new series with two different growth habits: Lazy trails (because it's lazy) and Sun is upright. Both come in five colors. Lazy Daze pictured.

Big EZEE Zonal Geranium (Dümmen)

This landscape geranium has large-and-in-charge flowers on a robust plant, making them tough and weather tolerant, Dümme says. Four colors: Red, Fuchsia Blue, Pink and Neon.

Danessa Primula (Sakata)

Smaller and much earlier—three to four weeks—than their Danova series, Danessa falls in our annuals section rather than next month potted plants section because Sakata was touting them as suitable for six-packs. An ideal plant for the southern market, there are 10 colors and one mix.

Grandahlia Dahlia (Syngenta)

A big plant, but with shorter peduncles, this series is ideal for gallon programs, 12-in. hanging baskets and containers no smaller than 6 in. in size. Includes five core colors and two novelties.



Anytime Pansiola (Proven Winners)

Finally, Proven Winners offers a pansy, giving customers more options for early spring combos. Dubbed a “pansiola” for having a trailing/spreading habit and flower size that’s somewhere between a pansy and a viola, Anytime is from the Cool Wave line of genetics. Four colors: Dove, Sunlight, Sugarplum and Quartz.

Cottage Bracteantha (Westhoff)

Good uniformity between the four colors marks this bracteantha series as special. Flowers are of equal size (yellows are usually larger) and the colors finish together, too. Narrow foliage limits the risk of botrytis, they say. White, Yellow, Bronze, Rose.

Success Petunia (Benary)

Benary was excited about this mounding/trailing seed petunia, which was bred by the breeder of the Ramblin’ series.. They say it’s seven days earlier than anything on the market and all of the colors (including Blue) time within six days. Success is good for packs to hanging baskets. Starts with eight colors and two mixes.

Molto Multis

Breeders continue to develop colorful combinations in a variety of forms from multi-variety liners and unrooted cutting packages to simple do-it-yourself recipes.



AdOROBles and GlamOROUS (Dümmen)

Two concepts similar to Dümmen's Confetti and Garden Party programs, these feature, as you might guess, Oro Farms varieties, such as Ecke and Westflowers. AdOROBles is a multi-liner program featuring 16 different combos, while GlamOROUS is a recipe program with 10 different combo recipes that you order as individual components.

Trixi (Selecta)

Selecta has added new genetics, including new petunia varieties, to their Trixi multi-liner offerings. This year, they added 12 new combos. Pictured is Trixi Nightfall.

Compatables (Green Fuse)

A recipe program from Green Fuse, there are several new mixes in this program of single and multi-species components. And now, for more convenience, you can get the varieties boxed together from cutting producer Oro Farms.

Confetti (Dümmen)

The progenitor of the whole multi-liner craze, Confetti gets a plethora of new combinations. They've added more genetics to the program, too, such as Wicked verbena, Yolo lobularia and Bella lobularia. Pictured is Shocking Pink.



One Touch (Benary)

Benary has added 20 new combos to this recipe program.

Kwik Kombos and Seedsations (Syngenta)

Along with adding eight new designs to their vegetative Kwik Kombos program, Syngenta introduced a premium seed combo program called Seedsations that's ideal for spring, summer and fall. Thirteen combos are made using three plugs in each design, which they will be one-half to one-third the cost of vegetative combo programs.

MixMasters (Ball FloraPlant)

This multi-liner program gets 12 new recipes, including the colorfully named A Grape Fit and Pink Outside the Box (pictured).

A+ Additions

The breeders are always working overtime to add colors and upgrades to their existing series. And when they're additions to already popular series, they're usually a no-brainer to add to your list. Here are 18 out of the hundreds on exhibit.



Easy Wave Velour Petunia (PanAmerican Seed)

Velour is a new three-color subseries of Easy Wave that features velvety new colors that come from Ball's "green gene" (used to breed Sophistica and Debonair). Red Velour offers a new definition of red petunia, they said. It needs 11 hours of daylength, while Berry Velour and Burgundy Velour require 10 hours.

Surfinia Sumo Petunia (Suntory)

A big and bold subseries of Surfinia that was bred for large containers and beds, the three new Sumo colors mound sumo-style up to 3 ft. high. The plants also have larger flowers than the regular Surfinias.

EnduraScape Verbena (Ball FloraPlant)

Introduced last year as Endura, but they had to change the name due to a conflict with another variety on the market. But that gave Ball FloraPlant a chance to better communicate what this verbena series is for: the landscape. Five more colors join the two originals.



Landscape Bandana Lantana (Syngenta)

This subseries spread twice the distance of regular Bandanas—about 36 in. Low maintenance because of its drought and heat tolerance. Landscape Bandana comes in four colors: Red, Pink, Yellow and Gold.

Hypnotica Dahlia (Dümmen)

Three new varieties with one interesting story. Hypnotica Tropical Breeze (pictured) was accidentally destroyed somehow during the breeding process. But all was not lost—the breeder remembered that, being

a good son, he'd given a plant to his mother. However, being generous, she'd given it away to a friend! The plant was tracked down and Tropical Breeze (along with Bellini and Sangria) joined the Hypnotica series.

Cool Wave Sunshine 'N Wine and Blueberry Swirl Pansy (PanAmerican Seed)

These two additions to the Cool Wave pansy series were named by the readers of Southern Living, Sunshine 'N Wine is good for fall production, while Blueberry Swirl is more suited for spring when cooler conditions will bring out the blue picotee.

MiniFamous Double Calibrachoa (Selecta)

Two new Doubles colors, Double Chiffon and Double Purple, broaden the range of MiniFamous Doubles to 11 colors.



Cruze Calibrachoa (Green Fuse)

The Cruze large-flowered calibrachoa series gets Persimmon, the first time we know of this fruit being used as a color name. Cruze Rose is also nice, if less imaginative.

Astra Osteospermum (Florensis)

This easy-to-grow series has a compact habit without pinching and PGRs. Three new colors are Terracotta, Orange (which Robbert Hammer joked was to commemorate the Dutch World Cup soccer team) and Pink.

Estrella Verbena (Westhoff)

The new Estrella UP subseries is meant for high-density production, because of its more upright habit than the regular Estrellas. UP colors include Blueberry, Vampire Red and Pink Ballet (which also has a slight fragrance).

Sweetunia Petunia (Dümmen)

Sweetunias are Dümmen's medium-vigor, medium flower-size series. Additions include Moonlight Bay (pictured), Hot Pink Touch, Purple Touch and Raspberry Lemonade. Hot Rod Red 2015 is an improvement.



Sunpatiens (Sakata)

This is one of those no-brainers—although with 20 colors in two subseries (Compact and Spreading) it's getting tricky to decide which to grow! Sunpatiens Compact gets Royal Magenta, Hot Coral and Pink. Sunpatiens Spreading gets Scarlet Red, Clear White and Shell Pink.

Cascadias Petunia (Danziger)

Cascadia Autumn Mystery is a real standout with its cream-yellow and burgundy flowers.

Supertunia Petunia (Proven Winners)

Supertunias get four new colors and two improvements: Black Cherry, Limoncello (which replaces Citrus), Morning Glory Charm (pictured), Rose Blast Charm, Indigo Charm Improved (the earliest of all the Supertunias, at week 5) and Mini Rose Veined Improved.

Todaisy Senecio (Pacific Plug & Liner)

Two new colors— Blue Charm and Magenta Charm—were added to this cool-season crop.



Florific New Guinea Impatiens (Syngenta)

Syngenta's seed New Guinea series gets Sweet Orange, a bicolor that earned an AAS award for its garden performance and large flowers that sit atop the plant. A great walleriana alternative for jumbo packs and small pots.

Snowstorm Bacopa (Proven Winners)

Proven Winners is dropping Snowstorm White and adding Snowstorm Snow Globe, which has a really nice clear white color. Plus, there's Snowstorm Blue Bubbles, the first double bacopa with enough figure to make

their series.

BIG Begonia (Benary)

There's now a new lighter pink color in the BIG series with Pink Green Leaf.

Million Bells Calibrachoa (Suntory)

Million Bells is practically the Kleenex or Xerox of calibrachoa. The series gets Bouquet Deep Red and Bouquet White. (Bouquets are the earliest of the Million Bells to bloom and are good for 4-in. programs.)

The Year of the Salvia

Each year, there seems to be extra activity in one class. Last year it was petunias. This time it was salvia, both annual and perennial. Here's a sampling.



Mannequin Blue Mountain (Hort Couture)

This is the biggest *S. farinacea* we'd ever seen. Turns out it's a tetraploid, which would explain the massive size—it's got four sets of chromosomes! That's Gerry Raker showing it off.

Cathedral Shining Sea (Green Fuse)

A purple and white bicolor *S. farinacea*.

Sallyfun (Danziger)

Sallyfun Deep Ocean is a *S. farinacea* with a deep color and dark stem. Like the rest of the Sallyfun series, it doesn't require pinching or PGRs. And it's a fast grower.

Blue Marvel (Darwin Perennials)

The folks at Darwin say Blue Marvel has the largest flower of any *S. nemorosa* on the market with a long flower spike to make for a more ornamental flower. But it also maintains a fairly controlled height (about 15 in.).



Ember's Wish and Love & Wishes (Skagit)

Two new hybrid salvias. Ember's Wish was auctioned off for the Make A Wish Foundation in Australia..

Sensation Series (Florensis)

A new series of compact *Salvia nemorosa* in six different colors..

Ablazin', Playin' The Blues, Color Spires (Proven Winners)

Proven Winners introduced their first salvia this year, in the annual and perennial categories. Ablazin' is a *splendens* type in two colors, Tabasco and Purple. Playin' The Blues is a *longisicata x farinacea*. Color Spires (not pictured) is a perennial *nemorosa* series with three colors.

Crazy Crosses

There are some strange Frankensteinesque crosses going on in back rooms these days. We can't tell you if they'll all survive in the marketplace or not. You'll have to find out for yourself.



Summerina Echibeckia (Pacific Plug & Liner)

Introduced to both curiosity and skepticism because it's only been trialed in Holland, this cross between an echinacea and a rudbeckia definitely created some buzz. Echibeckia is said to have the "appearance of rudbeckia and the strength of echinacea." Summerina comes in three colors—Orange, Yellow and Brown.

Foxlight Digitalis (Darwin Perennials)

An interspecific digitalis, Foxlight is Darwin's answer to Digiplexis Illumination, introduced last year. No vernalization is required and it continues blooming all season long. And it's available from cuttings instead of tissue culture. Colors are Plum Gold, Rose Ivory and Ruby Glow.

Torelus (Cohen)

A cross between a torenia and a mimulus? Why not! Although we have no idea what traits of each crop it will exhibit without trying it in our own garden, the Cohen folks say it's like a torenia plant with mimulus flowers. The series has eight colors.



Lilac Falls Stachys (Westhoff)

This stachys/lamium hybrid is a completely new plant class, said Chris Berg, who added that it's early to flower, ships well, takes the heat, doesn't require PGRs and can be used as a groundcover, in containers or hanging baskets.

Illumination Apricot, Berry Canary Digiplexis

(Cultivaris)

Digiplexis Illumination Flame was the talk of last year's Trials; this year Cultivaris introduces Apricot as a Sunset magazine exclusive. Berry Canary (pictured), bred by Walters Gardens, is the start of a new series of digiplexis. It's said to be more compact with a tidier appearance than Illumination.

Wonderful One-offs

These misfits may not fit into a series, but that's okay, they don't need a supporting cast to get attention. They'll sell just fine on their own.



Fire Dragon Canna (PlantHaven)

Virus-free because it's from tissue culture, this canna lily is great for combo containers.

South Beach Purple Skies Lantana (Hort Couture)

Jim Monroe calls this a "tweener" because its compact habit and medium vigor make it great for containers. The blooms mature to shades of yellows and pinks.

Candy Bouquet Calibrachoa (Westhoff)

Not quite the habit of Westhoff's Celebration calibrachoa series, which is why this stunning variety goes it alone.

Blue Eyed Beauty Osteospermum (Ball FloraPlant)

Named for its striking blue eye, this premium item is ideal for getting spring off to a good start. We could have easily put it into the "End Cap" category. Ball FloraPlant has added it to a few of their MixMasters combos.

Gazebra Red Gazania (Jaldety)

A gazania with variegated foliage, a full flower and full center.

Novel Components

Looking for a thriller, filler or spiller to make your combo containers stand out? Try one of these.



Red Velvet Euphorbia (Florensis)

Bred by Florensis but a Darwin exclusive, Red Velvet is an amygdaloides euphorbia that's hardy to Zone 5 when planted in the landscape.

Glitz Euphorbia (PanAmerican Seed)

A seed euphorbia that has medium vigor, so it mixes well with other plants in a pot. 90%+ germination.



Silverstar Helichrysum (Westhoff)

A tough silver-gray component plant with good branching and a tidy habit.

White Lava Colocasia (PlantHaven)

An ideal thriller in a big container, with its striking cherry stems and variegated leaves. Grows 4 ft. by 3 ft.

Diamond Delight Euphorbia (Proven Winners)

Think Diamond Frost but with double flowers and a less aggressive habit. **GT**
