

GROWERTALKS

Features

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More of the Good Stuff

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Photography by Chris Beytes, Ellen C. Wells & Jennifer Zurko

Every year, we try to include more highlights from Spring Trials in our August issue, but there's more to the second part of our coverage than just perennials and mums. There were a lot of different companies offering a wide range of hardgoods and new ideas for packaging plants. So enjoy our Part 2 potluck!

Perennials A-Plenty

Lots of breeding companies are going full-tilt into perennials because they still have traction with consumers who are looking for easy, pretty and long-lasting. Knowing this, many suppliers have come up with new marketing ideas and mixed combo recipes made up entirely of perennials.



Sunset Gaillardia (PlantHaven)

Bred by Realflo in the UK, there are two different series of Sunsets: medium and compact. There are three different colors in the Sunset Medium series, which finishes 2 in. taller than Sunset Compact. The Compact series also has three colors. Both are hardy to Zone 5. (Sunset Flash pictured above)

Vernique Rose Veronica (Green Fuse)

This new addition to the Vernique series is more mildew resistant than Pink and is very early to bloom. Zones 4 to 8.

Starship Scarlet Lobelia (Kieft Seed)

An F1 x *speciosa* lobelia, this perennial will do well in Zones 6 to 10. It's similar to lobelia Fans, but the bright red flowers on Starship Scarlet bloom one week earlier, says Kieft.

Vulcan Red Lobelia (Kieft Seed)

Unlike the hybrid Starship Scarlet above, this lobelia is an x *speciosa* that's open-pollinated. Closely related to Queen Victoria, it has very dark foliage and the dark red flowers open from the bottom up. Zones 6 to 10.



Whiteout Iberis (Kieft Seed)

This is a compact iberis that stays small but still features lots of white blooms that completely cover the plant. The bloom time is extended in cooler conditions. Zones 3 to 8.

Golden Spring Alyssum (Darwin Perennials)

The first time this type of *A. wulfenianum* has been commercially available in vegetative form, Golden Springs provides early spring flowering with a spreading, mounding habit. Spreading to 10 in. in the garden, it's super hardy at Zones 4 to 9.

Magic Show Enchanted Indigo Veronica (Proven Winners)

The first in a new collection, Enchanted Indigo needs no vernalization and reblooms in the fall. Zones 4 to 8.

Lemonjade Sedum (Proven Winners)

This upright and mounded plant that won't lodge or fall apart features bright yellow flowers in early fall that turn a rosy-peach under cool conditions. Zones 3 to 9.



Forever Purple, Black Taffeta, Little Cutie Sweet Tart, Grape Soda Heuchera (Terra Nova)

As always, Terra Nova had some new heucheras to show us, including several with dark, ruffled leaves (Black Taffeta) and ones for smaller spaces and containers (Little Cutie Sweet Tart). Zones 4 to 9. (Pictured: Forever Purple)

Honeyberry Erysimum (Skagit)

A cool-season variety with purple flowers that fade to a dusky shade. The variegated foliage also makes it ideal for containers. It's a Skagit exclusive. Hardy to Zone 8.

Sun Up Coreopsis (Kieft Seed)

What the folks at Kieft called “the season opener for perennials,” Sun Up is a reported 2 to 4 weeks earlier to flower than other varieties on the market. Zones 4 to 9.

Li'l Bang Coreopsis (Skagit)

There are four colors in this series: Daybreak, Enchanted Eve, Red Elf and Starlight. All of them grow compact and mounding, and require no vernalization. Hardy to Zone 5.



Perennial Combos (Kieft Seed)

For a couple of years, Kieft has been showing how well perennials work in mixed containers. These seed perennial combos rival or even beat annuals when it comes to color, texture and variety. Kieft now offers 22 combo recipes, which include 35 different varieties.

Cheers Erysimum (Darwin Perennials)

Vernalization isn't required for this new series that includes two colors—Mighty Mauve and Lemon Yellow—that have long bloom times. Zones 6 to 10.

Little Janie and Whiskers Deep Rose Gaura (Darwin Perennials)

Both of these *lindheimeri* types grow 18 in. to 20 in. in the garden and have interesting flowers. Little Janie has bicolor blooms and Whiskers Deep Rose (pictured) has filaments that look like cat's whiskers. Zones 6 to 10.

Arizona Agastache (Takii)

This first-year flowering series has three colors—Sun, Sandstone and Sunset—and is a quick turn because it's from seed. Four to five weeks from sow to transplant and nine weeks from transplant to finish. Hardy to Zone 6.



Mighty Velvet Stachys (HGTV HOME)

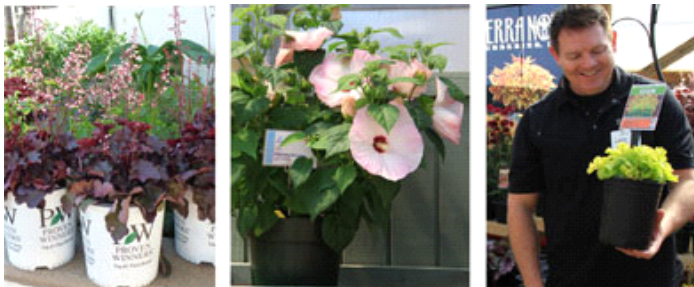
This will be the first year that HGTV HOME will be offering perennials in their lineup, including this stachys. Zones 7 to 9.

Leading Lady Coreopsis (Dümmen/Bartels)

The three varieties in this series are named after famous ladies of the Silver Screen—Charlize (which is a double, pictured), Lauren (a single) and Sophia (a tubular type). They're extremely hardy (Zone 4) and mildew resistant. No vernalization or daylength is required.

Giga Purple Scabiosa (Green Fuse)

With this new large-flowered introduction there are now three colors in the Giga series. Zones 4 to 10.



Dolce Blazin' Raisin Heuchera (Proven Winners)

This addition to the Dolce series features dark purple-black foliage with pink and white bicolor blooms. Zones 4 to 9.

Honeymoon Hibiscus (Floranova)

This new series doesn't need PGRs and includes three colors—Light Rose, White With Eye and Deep Red—that don't fade. Hardy to Zone 5.

Sunkissed Lime Geum (Terra Nova)

Bright chartreuse foliage is a stellar contrast to the orange flowers on this plant, which stays short and compact. Zones 5 to 8.

Schnazzy Shrubs

This category continues to grow as traditional horticultural lines blur. We saw several new woody ornamentals that will make interesting additions to grower and retailer mixes—even combos.



L.A. Dreamin' Hydrangea (Ball Ornamentals)

For the first time, there's a hydrangea that produces both pink and blue blooms on the same plant, and without an aluminum sulfate treatment! It's also the first consumer-facing brand for Ball Ornamentals (Ball Horticultural Company's woody division), so it includes branded pots and tags. The "L.A." in the name comes from the breeder's daughter Lindsey Ann, who passed away from cancer when she was 11 years old. Hardy to Zone 5.

Indigo Pearls Vaccinium (EuroAmerican Propagators)

Both varieties in this new blueberry series—Affera and Meena—are compact and loaded with delicious fruit. They perform well in alkaline soils and have an interesting bark texture. Great for patio containers and stays evergreen in warmer climates. Zones 6 to 9.

Lo & Behold Blue Chip Jr. Buddleia (Proven Winners)

A smaller and less brittle version of the original Blue Chip buddleia, this variety has fragrant purple flowers and grows 20 in. to 28 in. tall. Hardy to Zone 5.



Buzz Hot Raspberry and Wisteria Lane Buddleia (Cultivaris)

These two new butterfly bushes include some interesting characteristics. Buzz Hot Raspberry (pictured) is a unique color that's early and compact, making it great for containers. Wisteria Lane is named for its long, cascading flowers and because every housewife (desperate or not) needs one.

Bottle Pop Neon Pink Callistemon (EuroAmerican Propagators)

Commonly referred to as a bottlebrush shrub, this variety is ideal for southwestern climates where it blooms year-round. Zones 8 to 11.

Lemon Lace Sambucus (Proven Winners)

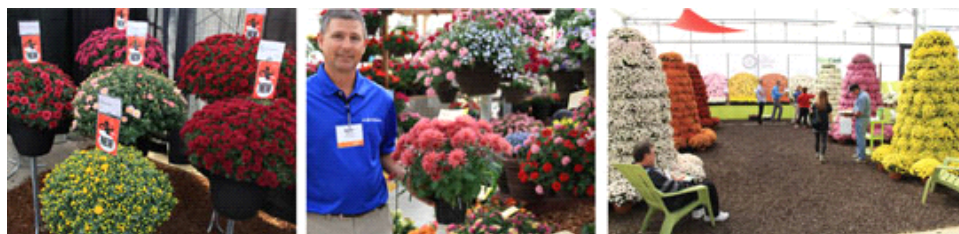
An eye-catching and touchable elderberry, Lemon Lace's cutleaf foliage grows into a mound of gold and green. White flowers appear in the spring, red fruit (inedible) come in the fall. Very hardy to Zone 3.

Yuki Cherry Blossom Deutzia (Proven Winners)

We saw deutzia for the first time last year and they had another variety to see this year that has pink flowers—a first in the collection. Hardy to Zone 5.

Mad About Mums

Your 2014 mum crop is already in the pots, but it's never too early to think about new varieties for next year.



Fides Garden Mums from Dümmen

Having to pull their mums from the market temporarily last year because of production issues, Dümmen is reintroducing them along with some new Belgian-type varieties. Purple & Pink is a new Daybreak (early) type; Pink Yellow Glow, Purple and Peaches 'N Cream are new Sunbeams (mid-early); and there's a new Yellow in the Eventide (late) types.

Garden Mums from Syngenta

Syngenta is introducing eight new garden mums, but the standout was Susan Coral (shown off by Mark Smith), which they said is often confused with being a pot mum because it's a spider type and has a larger flower.

Belgian Mums from GroLink

It was recently announced that Gediflora will now be taking over as the face of Belgian garden mums in the U.S. and Canada, but GroLink will continue to produce the cuttings. At Spring Trials, their display was simple, but packed a punch with mum pyramids formed from their new Belgian mum series Jasoda (pronounced Ya-soda). All six colors are late season under natural days, so they're best for the south, west coast and southeast—they would be too late for the northern markets. No pinching is needed and the plants are very moderate growers, so you don't need a lot of spacing during production. All of the colors flower uniformly and with the same vigor, without the use of Bonzi.



Pot Mums from Syngenta

Syngenta showed six new Yoder pot mums and one Fleurette. Outrageous Red (right) replaces Rage and has a larger flower and darker color. Sand Point Purple Bicolor (left) replaces Little Rock because it has a fuller habit and a significantly faster response. And Limerick

Lime ... well, we'll give you one guess what color it is.

Pot Mums from Royal Van Zanten

It was Royal Van Zanten's first time at Spring Trials and they didn't waste any time getting to the point about their goal of getting consumers to view pot mums as upscale and trendy. (They've done market research in Europe that shows how decorative sleeves will sell more mums even at higher prices.) Now available through Greenex in North America, Royal Van Zanten is introducing some new varieties such as Organza, which is a pure white, and Pura Vida (pictured), which has yellow and cream tones

Cut to the Chase

The cut flower category may have a smaller presence at Spring Trials than any other crop, but there were still some new varieties that deserve attention.



Jua Sunflower (Kieft Seed)

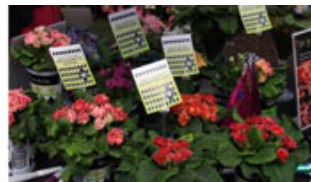
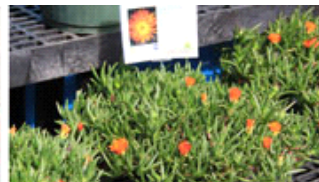
Fast growing—but more importantly, pollenless—this new series has two colors, Maya (pictured) and Inca.

Bonita Aster (Sakata)

This new series from seed has a crop time of 14 to 16 weeks from seed to sale. It also makes a good potted plant.

Hot for Pots

We put these under the potted plant category because it seems most convenient. But talk about versatile: many will work in patio containers, combos, as garden plants, holiday gifts, houseplants, perennials ...



Laser Cyclamen (Syngenta)

Synchro Scarlet has better holding ability at retail, while Snowridge Wine & Purple (pictured) is the first bicolor variety in the long-running Laser series.

Savvy Succulents (EuroAmerican Propagators)

Adding to their line of succulents, there's new Lipstick Echeveria, Sunburst Aeonium, Hart of Gold Mesembryanthemum (pictured) and Fire Crassula.

Party Girl Primula (Hort Couture)

This new series is ideal for winter sales. It has double frilled blooms in five picotee colors.



Aloha Lily Eucomis (Golden State Bulb)

Maui (ivory) and Nani (pink) are new and feature the same characteristics as the rest of the series: a coconutty fragrance, long shelf life and they work well as a cut flower.

Cantor Calla (Flamingo Holland)

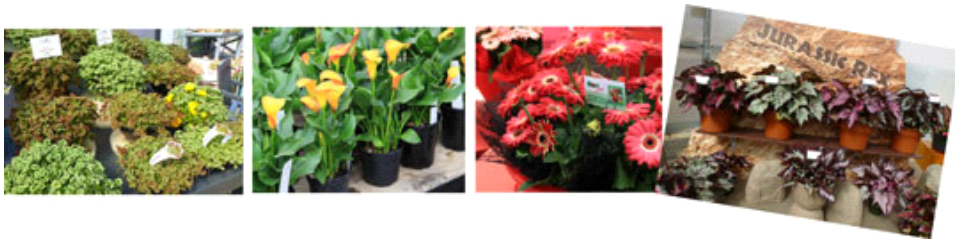
Deep, deep purple flowers that they say are bigger than Odessa's, which is the most popular purple-black calla on the market.

Comfort Carmina Celosia (Royal Van Zanten)

An unusual *Celosia spicata*, Comfort Carmina features variegated foliage and deep purple flowers. There's also POP and special branded sleeves to support the product at retail.

Lovely Red Freesia (Flamingo Holland)

An orange mid-height variety that's fast—it finishes in 10 to 11 weeks.



4 Luck Trifolium (Green Fuse)

A great decorative and gift plant for St. Patrick's Day, this authentic clover also works well as a component in containers and as a perennial in the garden because it's hardy from Zones 4 to 9. Both colors—Green Glow and Red/Green—like cool weather, but will thrive in the heat.

Callaifornia Callas (Golden State Bulb)

Now there's a red in the Callaifornia series. Carnival has lots of flowers and strong stems. There's also Sun (yellow) and Fiesta (pictured), which has a red edge and is a little more compact than the rest). But all of the varieties in the series are naturally compact, so they take up less space and require fewer PGRs.

Flori Line (Florist)

Florist's line of pot gerberas come in four different sizes, from big to tiny, for any use. They introduced two new Micros (Sunrise and Margarita), one Mini (Contour) and two Midis (Twilight and Eyecatcher Dark Purple, pictured).

Jurassic Rex Begonia (Ball Ingenuity)

This new rex begonia series features five unique colors and leaf shapes. Rex begonias prefer deep shade

and like it cool, so grow and market accordingly.



Shadow King Rex Begonia (Green Fuse)

There are two new additions to this series—Cherry Mint and Tuxedo (pictured). Production tip: grow Tuxedo cooler for a more pronounced black and white coloring.

Smartiz Cyclamen (Morel)

Oh so cute, this cyclamen series is compact and stays small, making it ideal for the miniature gardening trend.

Morning Sun Calla (Flamingo Holland)

The first time this variety has been available in North America, Morning Sun has maculated foliage and is named for its flame-orange color. (Available in trial quantities only, currently.)

Princess Lily Claire Alstroemeria (Royal Van Zanten)

White with a yellow throat, Claire also works well in baskets. And it blooms all summer long.

Ageha and Hirari Cyclamen (Varinova)

Varinova, distributed through young plant producer Headstart Nursery, introduced two double-flowered, ruffled, umbrella-type cyclamen. Ageha, which means “butterfly” in Japanese, is suited for 6-in. to 8-in. pots; while Hirari (pictured), which means “moving with the wind,” is more compact, for 4-in. pots.

Especially for Growers

It wasn't just plants at Trials anymore. Here are some new ideas and products designed to make growers' lives a little easier.



New Cell Size & Shipping Box from Plug Connection

Plug Connection is now offering a smaller 20 mm cell size for their Mighty 'Mato grafted vegetables that lets them get 208 plugs into a box and offer you free freight.

The Charlotte Collection from McConkey

Kim Fulk told us that McConkey is expanding its line of decorative grower containers, including the Charlotte Collection, which originated with Armstrong Garden Centers in California and named for Charlotte Armstrong, wife of the founder.

Thermo Shield Packing from EuroAmerican Propagators

EuroAmerican borrowed this idea from shippers of chocolate, to prevent cold or heat damage during shipping. They tried Thermo Shield this winter (a very cold one, as we all know) with great results. Liners are protected from extremes for up to 48 hours. Tear-away packaging helps you get the liners out easily.



Hydroponic Fertilizer from Oasis Grower Solutions

Oasis, already a provider of rooting media to the hydroponic world, now offers a fertilizer for hydroponics, as well. No, they don't now have a big chemistry lab—they partnered with a “very well known” fertilizer manufacturer to develop the 16-4-7 formulation.

Pelemix

A new exhibitor at Spring Trials, this Israel-based company does nothing but make coconut coir growing media, says USA Territory Manager Uri Roudman. Pelemix sources coir from Israel and Sri Lanka, and specializes in mixes for strawberries and hydroponic growing. They say coir got a bad rap due to salts and other issues when it first came onto the market, but they're strict on quality control. You should give it another look.

Mainspring Insecticide from Syngenta

Syngenta Plant Protection announced their new insecticide, Mainspring, which defends against chewing and sucking insects such as leafminers, thrips and whiteflies. Registration is expected this fall, they say. They also showed research data from some chemical trials they've been working on, including Bonzi (Syngenta now has a Bonzi drench guide in Spanish) and Micora fungicide to see how it helps against downy mildew and phytophthora.

Etc., Etc.

A few more odds and ends from the Trials.



Sequoia Group

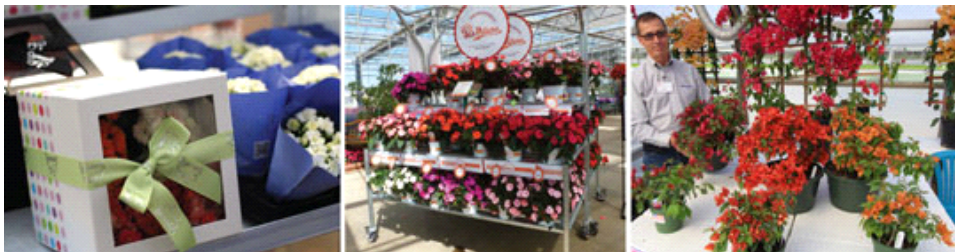
New to the U.S. market and to Spring Trials, this Chinese manufacturer specializes in decorative containers. They've been selling in Europe and Asia for 15 years and are now hoping to get their foot in the door here in the U.S, says General Manager Jonathan Law.

Container Creations from MasterTag

MasterTag, exhibiting at Sakata, told us they're focused on container gardening, since it's such a hot category. To that end they were showing a concept called Container Creations that's made up of three quart pots in a pot-holding collar with a handle for easy grab-and-go shopping (Summit provided the pots and collar). They also showed us an interesting way for a consumer to reserve and purchase large container in unstaffed garden centers (such as grocery parking lots): a tag that has a tear-off price sticker/barcode you carry to the cashier. When you tear it off, it reveals a "sold" label.

Gerbera from Sakata

"Daisies" are hot with consumers on the social media photography and idea site Pinterest, and Sakata says that "daisy" most often means gerbera. So they offered up a large display in their greenhouse showing Pinterest-worthy gerbera ideas. Plus, they participate regularly in Pinterest, watching for and sharing gerbera ideas. Interestingly, Sakata's display was just about the only mention of social media we saw anywhere at the Trials.



Queen Kalanchoe Packaging from Greenex

Kalanchoes make great gifts, but a pretty box tied up in a ribbon makes them even more appealing—and an easy mark-up. Greenex has launched the packaging in Europe and was showing it here, with concepts for holidays, baby showers and weddings. They say that the plants will last at least a week in the box, if not two (their kalanchoes are ethylene resistant), and that there will be sell-by dates on the boxes.

SunPatiens New Six-Pack and POP (Sakata)

Sakata is introducing new packaging and POP for their popular SunPatiens line for consumers and landscapers. They were also asking for feedback on a possible new logo for SunPatiens.

Vista Farms Bougainvillea Selections

Vista Farms has been selling bougainvillea lines from Holland's Rijnplant, but now they're doing their own selection work. The first two of these are Ruby (left) and Fire Opal (right). Both are sports of the widely available orange variety called Flame (center). Ruby is a red (well, as red as anything gets in bougainvillea, meaning a rich pink) and Fire Opal is an orange-amber shade. That's Jerome O'Neill. **GT**