

# GROWERTALKS

## Features

7/1/2019

### A Quiet Year in Cali

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The 2019 edition of the California Spring Trials (yawn) will go down in history as (yawn) ... confoundit, we need a quick powernap before we can craft a lead paragraph that doesn't put you to sleep, too. You see, we just didn't see much in the way of tremendous excitement or importance coming from the Trials back in late March to make for attention-grabbing headlines. It was one of those quiet introduction years that has participants asking each other, "Should we do this every other year instead?"\* (Our answer: No!)

Actually, that's not 100% accurate. We did see an important breakthrough, namely the launch of not one, but two, impatiens downy mildew-resistant impatiens series: Beacon by PanAmerican Seed and Imara XDR by Syngenta (although we wrote a cover story about Beacon more than a year ago, so it wasn't new news). One or both of these introductions could help bring back the impatiens market, which has declined by 40% to 60% or more in some markets.

There were a couple of partnerships announced—namely Dutch breeders HilverdaKooij merging with gerbera specialist Florist, and Proven Winners working an exclusive deal to distribute Classic Caladium's newest offerings. And we got a hint that Syngenta was interested in Varinova's cyclamen (on June 6, an acquisition was officially announced.)

We saw a bit more in rooted cutting planting technology from Dümmer Orange, in the form of perennials now being offered in their Basewell strip (an AutoStix strip in which they root the cuttings offshore before shipping them to you.)

And looking back through our notes and videos, there were plenty of solid new series, vivid color additions and creative mixed planter recipes introduced. Perhaps none were headline-worthy, but headlines don't help your registers ring. And you know better than anyone what your customers are looking for. (Wow, that powernap did our mood a world of good!)

So carry on into the following pages for a taste of the 40-plus breeders and plant introduction companies that participated in Spring Trials 2019.

Next month, we'll hit you up with perennials, woodies and potted plants. And to really relive Spring Trials, check out our daily email and video coverage at [www.springtrials.com](http://www.springtrials.com). Of course, we always preach that there's no substitute for visiting the Trials in person. Next year's California Spring Trials will be Saturday through Thursday, March 28-April 2, 2020.

*\* Hosting a Trial can be tremendously expensive. Even the smallest breeders can spend five figures on greenhouse rental, plant production, entertainment and staff meals, lodging and rental cars for the week or so*

needed for setup, hosting and teardown. A large breeder can spend well into six figures and that's to educate and entertain just 1,100 or 1,200 guests.

So every few years the breeders ask each other, quite casually, if maybe it's time to go to an every-other-year format? Or perhaps find a central location and host a three-day event with everyone displaying side-by-side in tents or a convention center? The cost savings of both options are attractive, but the every-other-year option means twice as many introductions with no more time to show them off. And the one-big-stop option isn't attractive to breeders that have their own facilities; they don't want to lose their home-court advantage. Plus, if you have a big, beautiful California greenhouse for your trials, would you give that up for a tent or tradeshow hall? Which is why Spring Trials have remained an annual, multi-location event since the 1970s when they were the Pack Trials.—C.B.

## Memorable Intros



### The official launch of Impatiens Beacon (PanAmerican Seed)

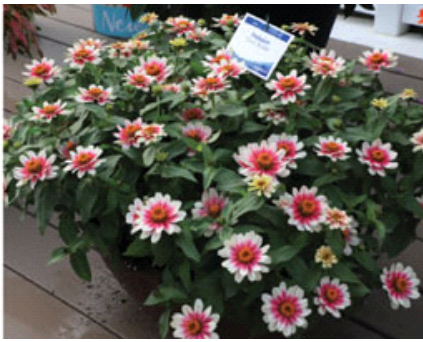
We've already written about PanAm's first IDM (Impatiens Downy Mildew)-resistant impatiens series. Now it's been introduced to the markets that most need it: the eastern and southern U.S., U.K., South Africa and Australia. By next year it will be fully available in all markets. Six colors and a mix, with more colors on the way (about the only important color missing is rose). It looked to be unphased by downy mildew in PanAmerican's inoculation trial. Of course, the true test is the consumer landscape.

### Impatiens Imara XDR & Vinca Cora XDR (Syngenta)

This is Syngenta's new IDM-resistant impatiens series and the first IDM-resistant impatiens to get a full global release. To show its powers against IDM, they had the Imara XDR and some control impatiens locked in a clear plastic box that had been inoculated with the disease. The controls were either dead or starting to show symptoms (depending upon age), while Imara looked fine. The series starts with nine colors and a mix. One note, however: Syngenta still recommends you use preventative fungicide sprays while growing Imara XDR. XDR means "extra disease resistance" and is a label they'll be adding to other crops, such as Cora XDR—Cora has been upgraded to be resistant to at least 10 different phytophthora strains.

### Geranium Tall Dark & Handsome (Westhoff)

Remember the Pillar geraniums from Oglevee? These are the same idea: geraniums that can grow upright to a height of about 3 ft. (with the help of a trellis or cage). As the name implies, these are dark-leaved, with a nice zone and four flower colors: Pink, Orange, Hot Pink and Deep Coral. These weren't bred by Westhoff; they're bred by a fellow named Charles Valin in the U.K., made available by PlantHaven, picked up by Westhoff and cuttings are produced by Vivero Internacional in Mexico. Got all that? Good. There will be a quiz.



### **Petunia Wave Carmine Velour (PanAmerican Seed)**

The Wave brand turns 25 this year and PanAmerican is planning on rolling out a large marketing campaign for consumers for spring of 2020. Their newest Wave variety is an All-America Selections winner and has a similar habit to the original Purple. You can never go wrong stocking a line extension when the line is as popular as Wave Petunias (to that end, there's also a new Easy Wave Lavender Sky Blue).

### **Zinnia Profusion Cherry Bicolor (Sakata)**

Another line extension that's a no-brainer to stock, Cherry Bicolor is the first bicolor in the award-winning Profusion line. And here's an interesting characteristic: It starts out light in color and darkens as it ages, rather than the other way around.

### **Alstroemeria Colorita Katiana (Royal Van Zanten)**

What makes an alstroemeria so special? Variegation! It looks a bit like a medium-sized hosta with some beautiful, red, non-hosta flowers. We thought it would make a nice centerpiece for a Christmas tablescape. Habit is compact and mounding; it's best in 7- to 8-in. pots.



### **Digitalis Pink Panther (Takii)**

It's a beautiful pink, and planted en masse in the middle of Takii's trial greenhouse, it was lovely. What's also loveable is the fact that it's first-year flowering (needing no vernalization), has branching that encourages multiple flowers and can overwinter down to Zone 6. Where'd it come from? The Sahin breeding lines that Takii purchased back in 2007.

### **Lantana Hot Blooded (Syngenta)**

Its super-intense orange-to-hot-red color will make it stand out in the summer garden, while its versatility will take it from 2.5-quart pots to patio planters to the landscape. Plus, it's sterile, which means it won't cycle in and out of color, and it won't spread by seed. Hot Blooded is a one-off color, so consider it for one of your endcaps next spring.

### **Dahlia Sincerity (Syngenta)**

It's from breeding they acquired via their acquisition last year of Verwer, a Dutch dahlia specialist. Dahlias may not be a churn-and-burn high-volume crop, but they're gorgeous and customers can't help but be wowed by their big blossoms, and this one is specifically a winner in the beauty department. And not only is it pretty, it's got a great

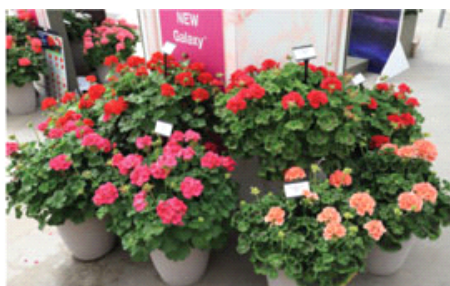


habit and a giant flower size.

### **Begonia Betulia series (Ball Ingenuity)**

This is a compact *hiemalis* type with small leaves and loads of flowers. It's a tough little plant that's good for quarts or 6-in. pots and suited for sales from Easter through Memorial Day, used indoors or out. We just loved the tight, tidy habit and think it should present well in the most brutal retail settings. Bred by Koppe, the series starts with four colors: Red, Candy Pink, Light Pink and Bright Pink.

## **New Series**



### **Zinnia Zesty (Ball Ingenuity)**

Bred by PanAmerican Seed, this series features colorful, intense colors—there are no wimpy pastels on these plants. Ideal for pots and beds because of its great vigor, uniformity and knee-high height. Fully double blooms come in six colors and a mix.

### **Geranium Galaxy (Ball FloraPlant)**

Another zonal geranium series? Yes. What Ball FloraPlant did to select this one is an extensive system of trials from which they accumulated a million data points on 100,000 potential varieties with the goal of assembling the best heat-resistant, garden-performing varieties. The result is Galaxy, a series they say will go up against anything in the market—including the class-leading interspecific series Calliope. While Galaxy Dark Red isn't quite as dark as Calliope Dark Red, it's still nice. Will it perform as well? That's up to customers and consumers to decide.

### **Nemesia Fairy Kisses (Kientzler)**

Fairy Kisses has *N. fruticans* blood, which means a tougher habit, better heat tolerance and more bicolors than their existing Babycakes series. Three colors in the series—Vanilla Berry, Citrine and Boysenberry.



### **Impatiens SunStanding Spot-On, Jazzy (Dümmen Orange)**

It's been a few years since Dümmen Orange unveiled their sun-loving SunStanding impatiens. This year they've added two subseries. Spot-On (notice the dot rather than the hyphen between the two words), is a vigorous impatiens in six colors, each with a distinctive "spot" right in its center. Jazzy features heavily variegated foliage reminiscent of the very earliest New Guinea impatiens offerings. It comes in two colors, Coral and Hot Pink.

### **Viola Quicktime (PanAmerican Seed)**

Why another viola series? Because this one is the earliest on the market, they say—about two weeks earlier than the competition. Ideal for European, Northern U.S. and Canadian markets, Quicktime is daylength neutral and starts with six colors. Offered in primed seed with a 90%+ germ standard.

### **Zinnia Preciosa (Takii)**

This zinnia is an F1 seed series that grows 12 in. to 18 in., depending upon where you're gardening. They compare it to the Magellan series. Preciosa has seven colors and two mixes. Orange, only available in their Tropical Blend mix, will eventually be separated out.



### **Pentas Graffiti 20/20 (Benary)**

The Graffiti Pentas series gets a complete upgrade for better uniformity in size and timing, and larger flowers. Plus, it gets a new color, Flirty Pink (shown).

### **Pentas SunStar (Proven Winners)**

Pentas is a brand-new class for Proven Winners and SunStar is a “big and beefy” vegetative pentas with strong stems, large umbels and big flowers. Available in four strong colors, SunStar is said to grow well in the spring, too, not just in the heat of summer. Is this the only vegetative pentas on the market? Maybe—let us know if we're wrong.

### **Gerbera Color Bloom (PanAmerican Seed)**

Its foliage is smaller and less leafy than competing series, so the flowers, which sit up high, really stand out. Add to it colors that don't fade and an early finish time (seven to 10 days sooner than the competition), and this new series of five colors is one you should consider if you're in the market for compact (quart-size) gerberas.



### **Begonia Viking (Sakata)**

You might guess from the name that Viking is an oversized benariensis type that competes with the other big boys in the category—Whopper, BIG and Top Hat. One advantage it may possess over the competition is that it offers three foliage colors (green, bronze and chocolate), eight different flower colors and two sizes: Viking and Viking XL—just in case the regular Viking isn't big enough for ya.

### **Begonia SuperCool (Benary)**

SuperCool offers the earliness of Sprint Plus with the performance of Super Olympia. Plus it's literally cool—you can

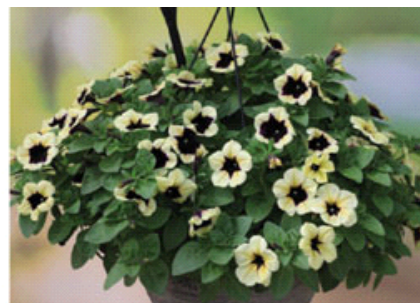


grow it as low at 55F. Available in four colors.

### **Dahlia Venti (Selecta One)**

Like Starbucks' largest coffee, it's big, suitable for 1-gal. and premium containers. Selecta One says it's 20% more vigorous than their Dalaya series, has bigger flowers and is totally appropriate for landscapes, too. The series offers nine colors.

## **Other Notable New & A+ Additions**



### **Petunia Surfinia Purple Starshine (Suntory)**

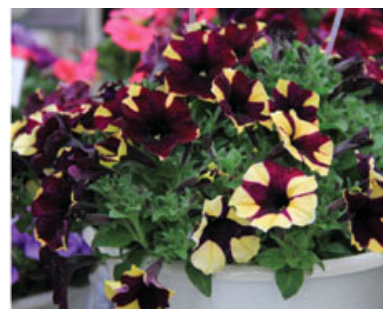
Surfinia is the elder statesman of vegetative petunias, celebrating 30 years in the market. Yet the collection is keeping up with the times with the addition of a great new star pattern.

### **New Guinea Impatiens Roller Coaster Hot Pink (Dümmen Orange)**

It's a fully double, curly petaled, large-flowered New Guinea. Nice dark leaves, too, which helps the flowers pop. One color to start with. Will there be others? More than likely.

### **Petunia Headliner Dark Saturn (Selecta One)**

Another striking colorpattern to add to the Headliner series, which is best known for Night Sky. Dark Saturn features a dark center surrounded by a pale yellow ring. (By the way, they've found that the ring becomes more yellow under cooler temperatures.) This medium-vigor petunia is best for hanging baskets and 6-in. pots.



### **Petunia Supertunia Vista Snowdrift, Raspberry Rush (Proven Winners)**

If you miss Supertunia Raspberry Blast (which was lost to the orange gene debacle) then rejoice that there's a replacement ... sort of: Supertunia Raspberry Rush (pictured). Granted, it's not exactly the same flower color or plant habit, but it's not a bad substitute.

### **Calibrachoa Cabaret Good Night Kiss, Diva Orange (Ball FloraPlant)**

The Cabaret series now has two early varieties (about one to two weeks earlier than the others) with novelty bloom patterns. Interestingly, the pattern of Diva Orange is said to change as the flower matures.

### **Petunia Crazytunia additions (Westhoff)**

As the name implies, this collection offers the wildest colors of any petunias on the market. This year, they added five new ones: Lemon Burst, Purple Prince, Purple Storm, Cherries Jubilee and—the winner of our Wacky Name Award for the 2019 Spring Trials—Spider Girl.



### **Pansy Cool Wave Strawberry Swirl, Raspberry Swirl (PanAmerican Seed)**

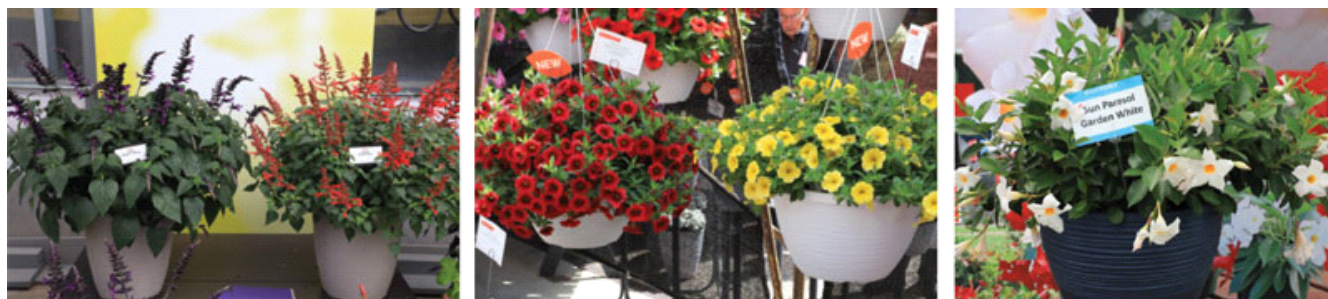
There are finally pink and lighter colors in the Cool Wave series: Strawberry Swirl and Raspberry Swirl. They suggest growing Raspberry Swirl for fall sales because the bloom color doesn't fade in the heat of late-summer/early fall production.

### **Petunias from Danziger**

The Israeli breeder showed us several, starting with three new colors to the Capella series: Ruby Red, Baby Pink, and the talk of the trial, Neon Pink. They fill out pots, yet remain tidy and compact. A few additions to other series include: Red and Purple Ice in the cascading Cascadias; Pink, Fluttering Hearts and King of Hearts in the heart-stamped Amoré series; Buttercream in the Littletonia series; and Pistachio Cream in the Ray series.

### **Nemesia Honey Dark Purple, Dark Red, Basket Sky Blue (Cohen)**

One of the most uniform and floriferous of any nemesia, they say (and we agree, at least based on how they looked in Cohen's trial). Basket Sky Blue isn't as upright as the others, so, as the name suggests, it's best for hanging baskets or for trailing out of a container. Dark Purple is pictured.



### **Salvia Roman Red, Purple & Bloom (Ball FloraPlant)**

Salvia Roman Red looks almost like an oversized *Salvia splendens*, but it's actually a salvia hybrid with big red blooms. Next to it was Salvia Purple & Bloom (think Black & Bloom, but with big purple flowers). They compared it to the variety Amistad, but said it's 25% more compact.

### **Calibrachoa Bloomtastic Yellow, Cherry (Dümmen Orange)**

Two color additions to their most vigorous calibrachoa series, featuring large flowers and great heat tolerance.

### **Mandevilla Sun Parasol Mitebuster Red, Garden White (Suntory)**

The reason it's called Mitebuster is because the foliage of this variety is fuzzy, which the breeder says will help keep crawling insects like mites at bay. It's also leaf-spot resistant, too. Garden White works well in hanging baskets



because of its cascading habit.



### More SunPatiens from Sakata

SunPatiens gets four new colors: Vigorous Orange, Vigorous Tropical Orange (“Tropical” indicates it’s variegated), Vigorous Lavender Splash and, most importantly, Compact Orchid Blush. Why most importantly? Because it’s been bred for improved drought tolerance and they’ll eventually work that trait into the whole series. We asked how this was possible and were told that they’ve added the blood of an impatiens from Indonesia that has a drought-resistant trait.

### Petunia Trilogy Lime, Purple Vein (Takii)

The Trilogy series is touted (and named) for its three attributes: compact growth for less tangling on the bench, long shelf-life, and garden performance that includes all-season flowering and a spread of about 32 in. Lime and Purple Vein are new; Takii also showed an experimental Pink.

### Dianthus Diana Loving White (Hem)

This *D. chinensis* is called white, but it actually blushes in various shades of pink, while maintaining a crimson eye.

## The Year of the Begonia



Besides the three we’ve already mentioned, there were so many more new begonia introductions we saw during the week that we decided 2019 must be the Year of the Begonia. Intros include:

**Dreams Esme Peach** (*pictured*); **Beauvilia Dark Salmon, Hot Pink** (Beekenkamp)

**Funky Light Pink, White, Orange, Scarlet** (Benary)

**Bossa Nova Night Fever Papaya** (Syngenta)

**Tophat Rose Bicolor** (Syngenta)

**BIG Pink Bronze Leaf** (Benary) (*pictured*)

**Rex Bewitched** (Green Fuse)

**Crown Jewels** (J. Berry) (*pictured*)