

Varieties And So Much More

The California Pack Trials is definitely a must-attend event for seeing the best new plant introductions, but it is also a great place to pick up marketing trends and display ideas.

By Bridget White



It seems like forever ago that seven of us from *Lawn & Garden Retailer* were traveling through the pouring California rains and taking in all the new ideas at Pack Trials. Despite getting wet shoes and socks, we made it to all 30-plus companies and came home with enough information to last us at least a year.

And if we didn't know it before, we certainly do now: Pack Trials is so much more than just varieties. Sure, the introductions are a big part of the event; in fact, they're the center of the show, but it has almost become expected that companies will show great new varieties. That means each exhibiting company now shows new marketing programs, ways to use crops, elaborate exhibits or something else to set it apart from the others.

We tried to look past all the enticing displays and identify a few of the programs/varieties we thought spoke specifically to retailers, but even in seven pages we could not fit everything. The best idea is for you to mark off some time next April and check out the Pack Trials for yourself.

Programs Galore

Marketing, merchandising and branding — the California Pack Trials has been the primary launching pad for such programs the past few years. ▶

Top: Goldsmith's Indoor Décor program rides a popular trend with home makeover shows: interior gardening. Left: Proven Winners has added a new dimension to its marketing with a new focus on lifestyle publications. Right: The Garden Secret program from S&G Flowers tempts customers to handle plants.



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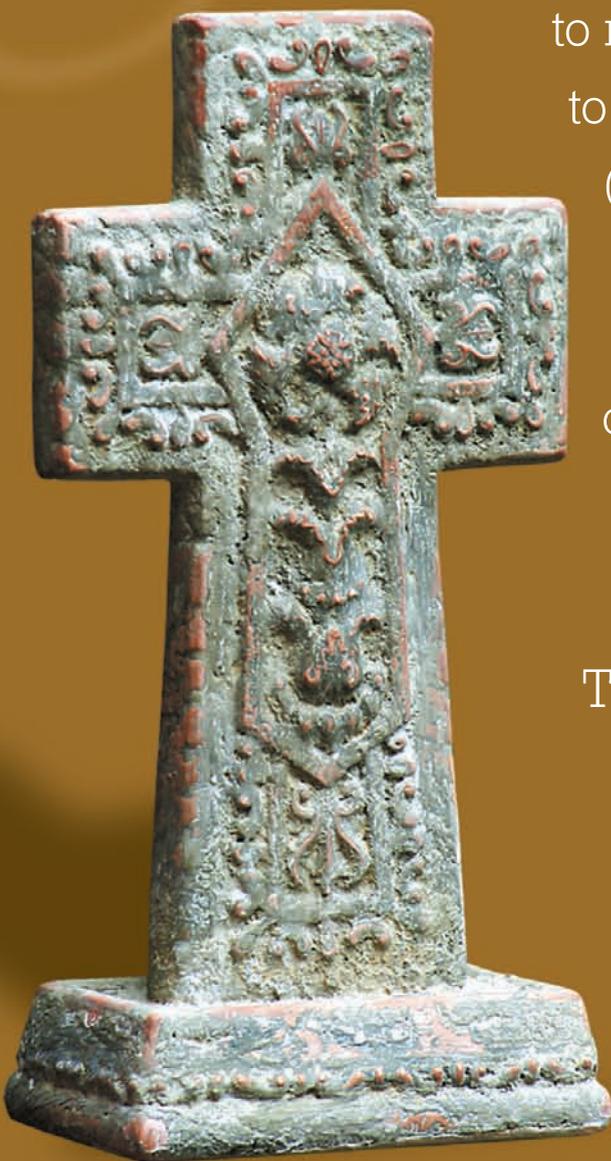
From **steeple**s
to necklaces,
to home décor

(hey, that's us!), the **CROSS**
has been used as both a
religious symbol and as an
ornament since **the start of civilization!**



The most familiar cross is the Latin
(Crux Immissa).

Two crosses in particular have
made a **HUGE** impression in the U.S.
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Groom, Texas, standing **190 feet** tall;
the other, located in Effingham, Illinois,
stands at **198 feet!** Wow!



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PACK TRIALS

There have been so many brands and so much POP that most exhibiting companies have renamed their sites as open houses instead of trials.

All of this branding has been good for the industry. It helps us compete with other branded industries and differentiates one product line from the next.

This year, however, we noted a new focus for many of the marketing ideas. At almost every turn, attendees were given literature, shown varieties or explained an idea that would help growers perform their jobs better — everything from liners programmed to bloom in four weeks to new shipping methods to new ways to use product.

Still, we saw some great new marketing programs that are perfect for independent garden centers. The following represent just a few of the most interesting.

Indoor Décor (Goldsmith Seeds). Recognizing that many garden plants can be grown indoors, Goldsmith selected a number of its varieties that growers can market as home decorative accessories. A great new trend in decorating, flowers are now featured on all the home improvement shows. This program not only brings the trend to life but also helps growers succeed with the trend by identifying crops for this use.

Lifestyle Marketing (Proven Winners). Proven Winners (PW) has become the standard for marketing and branding programs, but the company focus at this year's Pack Trials was all about new markets. In addition to the gardening magazines PW has used for several years, it has also begun advertising in lifestyle magazines such as *Martha Stewart Living* and *Everyday with Rachael Ray*. By focusing on lifestyle in addition to gardening, PW hopes to introduce its product to a new market. The partnership with garden guru P. Allen Smith should also help reinforce PW's message.

Plant Passport (PanAmerican Seed). PanAmerican's Plant Passport program is based on the belief that a simple tag will not capture the attention of a busy non-gardener. Instead, PanAmerican has selected a group of



Top: S&G Flowers has developed a new marketing program for Festival gerberas. Bottom: The Plant Passport program from PanAmerican Seed tries to entice customers with descriptive stories.

plants with a story to tell and created a “passport” for each. This booklet has the look of a real passport and includes such information as name, point of origin and place of residence (light requirements) along with a story about what the plant has to offer. PanAmerican believes writing descriptive information and culture requirements in this narrative format will engage consumers on a deeper level, appeal to those who want more than just a plant and result in increased sales.

Garden Secret (S&G Flowers).

As in years past, S&G had a display of the company’s newest marketing ideas. Most innovative of the new offerings was the secret program. It features printed pots with standard culture information on one side and a “secret” to success on the other. These secrets are surprisingly common ideas, but the draw to pick up the pot and read the extra information is irresistible.

Premium Festival (Sakata Seed America). Sakata showed several new marketing programs, including a new tag for Kong coleus, but the one we were more interested in was an upscale pot and matching tag from The John Henry Company. A color scheme of black, white and tan stripes invokes a black-tie look that begs for premium pricing.

Varieties To Note

There were many new varieties and a few new series additions this year, but what we really noticed were the number of improvements being made on crops. Improving existing varieties and creating better-differentiated series was definitely one of the major trends this year. And even though improved varieties are not considered the most exciting part of Pack Trials, they are the only way to ensure favorite varieties will remain viable.

In the way of new introductions, we have a few recommendations on some of the more interesting varieties that caught our eyes. Keep in mind: There were hundreds of plants to choose from, and this is just a handful of many great varieties presented this year. Read on to learn about some of our favorites, and if you would like to see a complete listing from each company, check out that company’s Web site.

Bacopa

This was the year of bacopas at Danziger “Dan” Flower Farm. The company added a number of varieties to its Copia series and a new jamesbrittenia series as well. In the

Copia series, Danziger added six new varieties: Two (Gulliver Snow and Gulliver Lilac) have extremely large flowers for a bacopa, and four have large flowers (Great Rose, Great Violet, Great Blue Lake and Great Purple). The new jamesbrittenia Britney series has five interesting, bright colors that really stand out among bacopas (Purple, Lilac, Coral, Orange and Maroon). Since jamesbrittenia types are not as widely used any more, these are a great new item to bring to the market. ▶

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- Copia has very good heat tolerance and durability.
- Britney is early and compact; the series flowers continuously and loves the heat.
- Both are great in baskets and mixed containers.

Begonia

The Dragon Wing and BabyWing series have really been a hit for PanAmerican Seed, and this new addition to the group continues that tradition. 'BabyWing White' is a new pure-white-flowered F1 cane begonia that joins the popular 'BabyWing Pink'. Like the original, 'BabyWing White' is maintenance free and features early flowering and continuous color. This variety is extremely heat tolerant and handles stressful conditions well.

- Maintenance free all season long.
- Very heat tolerant.
- Early flowering with continuous color.



Bacopa 'Copia Great Blue Lake'



Begonia 'BabyWing White'

Calibrachoa

A real breeding breakthrough, calibrachoa 'MiniFamous Double Pink' is the first double calibrachoa on the market. Offered by Selecta First Class, 'MiniFamous Double Pink' has fully double flowers that retain the small size of standard calibrachoa. Selecta has applied for a utility patent on the double look and anticipates theirs will be the only double cali available for some time.

- Semi-trailing habit shines in a basket.
- Doubleness is very stable, showing on all flowers.
- More colors to come.

Chrysocephalum

The Flambé series from PW represents an impressive innovation in breeding on this helichrysum relative. This unique crop is not available in mass quantities in the market; PW is one of the few companies to carry it. 'Flambé Orange' begins flowering immediately, while 'Flambé Yellow', which has neat silver foliage, flowers about one week later. Both provide a lot of interest with their unique, "petal-less" flower form.

- Offers continuous blooming all summer.
- Plants love bright light.
- Drought tolerant once established.



Calibrachoa 'MiniFamous Double Pink'



Chrysocephalum 'Flambé Yellow'

Nemesia

Within the past few years, breeder/marketer companies have really been making a push in the nemesia category, and Fides North America has joined the ranks with the new Angelart series. The exciting thing about this series, aside from a plant that does not break apart in the center, is the large flowers that are very fragrant. Angelart is available in seven colors of Almond, Cherry, Fruit Punch, Melon, Orange, Peach and Pear.

- Mounding habit on large, showy plants.

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- Plants have strong colors that do not show fading.
- Potential fall product for the South.

Osteospermum

A number of breeder/ marketer companies introduced new terra cotta colored osteos, but this one from Ecke Ranch really stood out. What is different about 'Cape Daisy Nuanza Copper Purple' is its unusual coppery-purple color. This is just one example of the exciting, new colors being developed in osteos, moving away from the traditional white and purple so characteristic of the crop. Copper Purple's color actually comes more alive in the sun giving it an iridescent spark. It is one of the more defined bicolors we saw during the trip.

- Heat sensitive; not recommended for summer sales.
- Flowers are a trendy, upscale color.
- Early season extender.

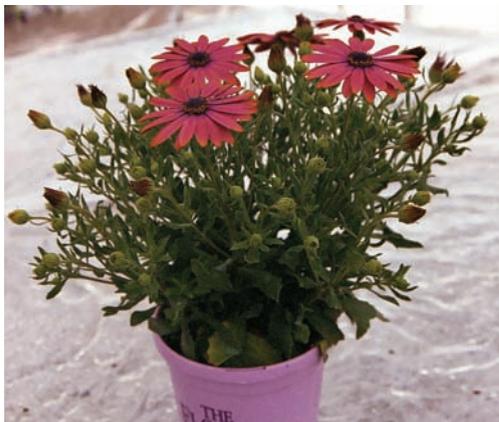


Nemesia 'Angelart Orange'

- Unique color pattern stands out.
- Heat and frost tolerant.
- Continuous flowering all summer.

Ranunculus

'Magic Mixture' is a new dwarf ranunculus mixture from Goldsmith Seeds. It has a nice bright and bold mix of colors. The new series is naturally compact so ▶



Osteospermum 'Cape Daisy Nuanza Copper Purple'

Phlox

A killer, high-impact bicolor flower is the main selling point for this hybrid phlox. 'Intensia Star Brite', marketed by PW, is the first bicolor of these hybrid types, and its unique striped flowers are a standout in mixed containers or monoculture pots. Make sure to keep the light high, and add a little extra feed so plants will perform all through the summer.



Phlox 'Intensia Star Brite'



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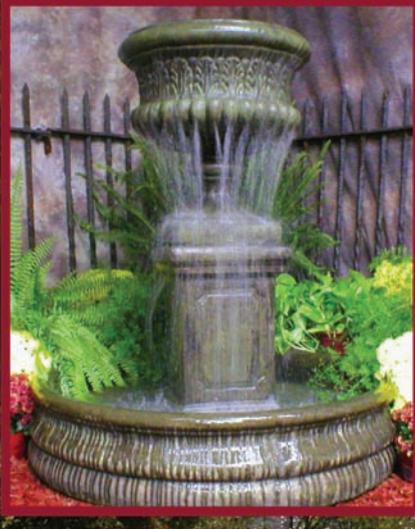
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plants retain their shape at retail. Currently, 'Magic Mixture' is only available as a mix, but we are told Goldsmith is working on separate colors. 'Magic Mixture' works for early spring sales as a bedding plant or a flowering potted plant.

- Established plants can take low temperatures.
- Ranunculus is often sold as a premium item.
- Large blooms on short stems make a big impact.



Ranunculus 'Magic Mixture'

Vinca

The Cascade subseries is an exciting new addition to Fischer USA's Phytophthora-resistant Nirvana series. Nirvana Cascade has a great habit that tumbles over the sides of containers to give a full effect. The series offers an array of flower colors, from soft lavenders and pinks to bold reds and violets. The extra-large flowers are best realized on the new Pink Splash: a trial favorite.

- High light and warm temperatures are needed for sustained flowering.
- Good heat tolerance.
- Patented resistance to aerial Phytophthora disease.



Vinca 'Nirvana Cascade Pink Splash'

Zinnia

'Profusion Double Cherry' from Sakata Seed America is a new and unique double flower form for the Profusion series. The plant is still compact and well-branched like the rest of the Profusion series but is the only double variety in the series. Flowers actually get more double in the heat and often make a blanket of color. The coloring on Double Cherry is a good dark-cherry-pink color for this series.

- Works for spring and fall sales.
- Dwarf and uniform in both packs and landscape.
- Tolerant of heat and resistant of diseases throughout the year. 🌸



Zinnia 'Profusion Double Cherry'

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