

SPRING TRIALS

showstoppers

Whether admired for their beauty or garden strength, these striking new varieties stopped us in our tracks at this year's California Spring Trials.

By Jasmina Radjevic

With hundreds of new varieties on display at the 2011 California Spring Trials, it's impossible to share every new variety with you. We managed to pick some of our favorites. Read on, and see which ones grab your attention; you may want to add them to your plant selection next year!



Argyranthemum

Bred by NuFlora, Ecke Ranch added a new color to its argyranthemum Comet series: 'Comet Peppermint'. This upright, mounding plant features an interesting blend of pink and white flowers.



Coleus

Molten Coral is part of an interesting new series of coleus offered by Hort Couture. Named for its coral-like appearance, the Under the Sea collection boasts exotic, deeply lobed leaves in electric colors. The series also has a great story: It was bred by students at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, and a portion of the profits will go right back to the classroom.



Begonia

Green Fuse Botanicals introduced a new series of rex begonias this year: Shadow King. Available in four color combinations — Moonlight (pictured), Rothko, Green Envy and Strawberry Lime — indoor gardeners will love this series as they perform very well indoors and in shady areas.



Calibrachoa

Cherry Star and Grape Punch are two new stunning introductions to Proven Winners' Superbells collection. 'Superbells Cherry Star' has a unique flower color and pattern, with a "yellow star" that radiates across petals. 'Superbells Grape Punch' exhibits that same eye-catching bicolor as the other Punch varieties, with a large purple flower and deep velvet ring around a yellow eye.



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GREENGOODS



Dahlia

Dümmen USA displayed a new series of dahlia, XXL. As the name demonstrates, these varieties have gigantic flowers — almost 6 inches wide! These plants love large containers and can tolerate the heat. 'XXL Benito' was one of our favorites, with its giant creamy peach petals and vivid yellow center.



Gazania

New Day is a new series bred by PanAmerican Seed. It holds better at retail and produces beefier plants than traditional gazanias. Although each color in the series showed nicely, 'New Day Orange Clear' wowed us with its bright and perfectly clear orange flowers.

Geranium

Ecke Ranch continues to expand its collection of regal geraniums that delivers early spring color and uniform habit across the varieties. New this year, 'Elegance Cherry Blush' boasts soft-pink flowers with bright red veins and a white center. It will definitely have high impact and instant consumer appeal.



Osteospermum

A true breakthrough in breeding, the 3D Daisy series bred by Selecta has the same culture as a traditional osteospermum but with a double flower. Gardeners will be thrilled with this osteospermum that boasts an open bloom ... all day and all night!



Petchoa

'SuperCal Pink Ice' is a new introduction to Sakata's series of petunia-calibrachoa hybrids. SuperCal is an ideal combination with large flowers, unique colors and strong petals, not to mention plants are self cleaning due to non-sticky foliage.



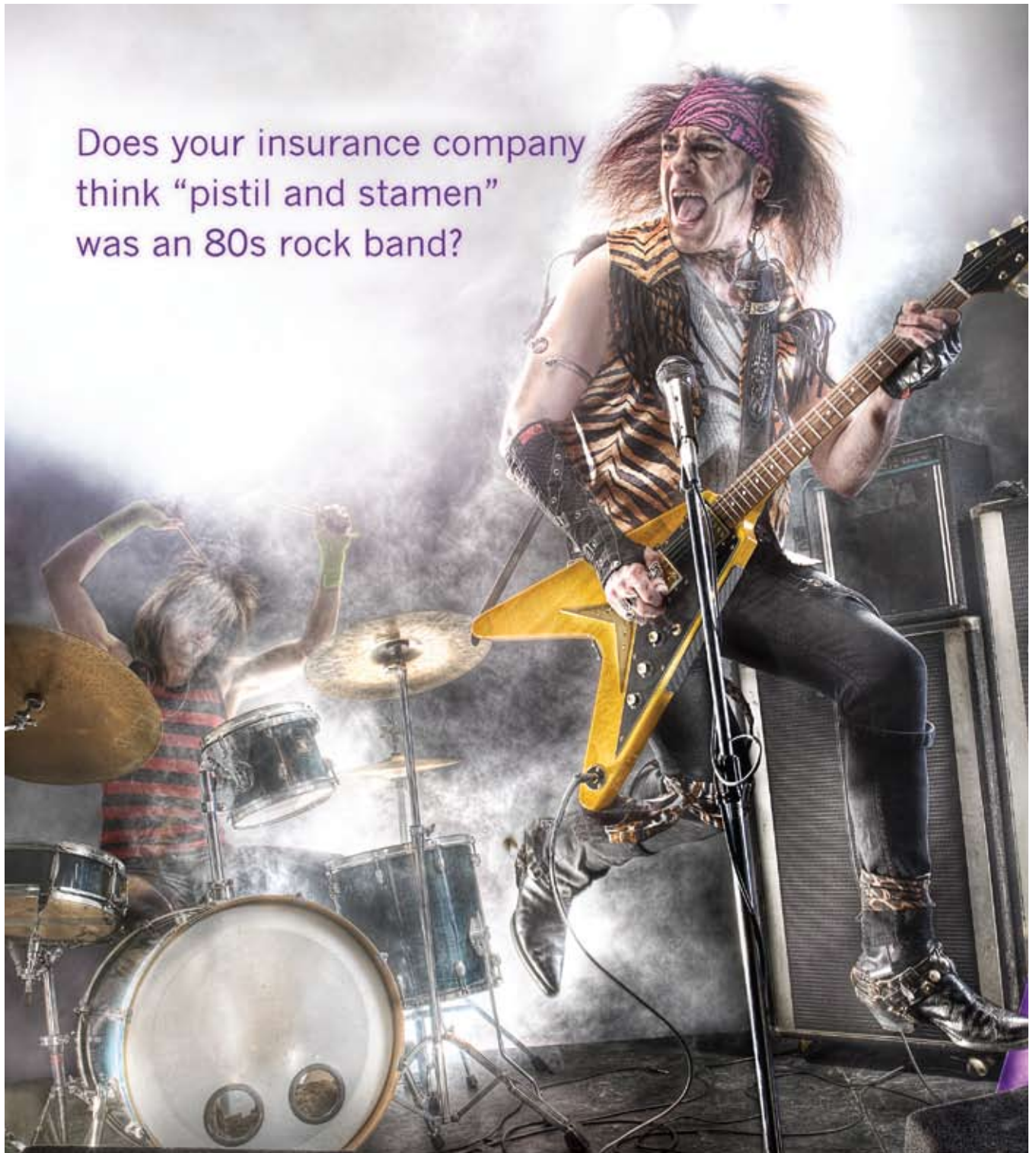
Pansy

'Nature Rose Picotee' is the first picotee color in American Takii's Nature series. The best characteristic of this strong landscape performer is that the many vivid flowers are continuously produced by each plant, keeping the garden floriferous with color.

Floranova introduced a new series of trailing pansies. Freefall comes in a range of five lovely colors, all with a vigorous spreading habit and medium-sized flowers.



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Verbena

'Lanai Twister Pink' is one of the most unique verbena introductions we've come across. The white to light pink flower clusters have a vivid pink center unlike any other verbena on the market. Lanai verbena is a great early spring season plant due to its frost tolerance.



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Petunia

One variety that really made a statement was Fides's 'Fortunia Purple Heart'. This is a must-see in person; our photography does it no justice. This variety boasts stunning color, light purple on the outside of the flower with dark-purple veins reaching to the center.

At last year's trials, Suntory began characterizing some of its series by their ideal applications (mounding, trailing, etc). The Surf-*finia* Bouquet series is floriferous and dense, creating a compact cluster of flowers. New to the series, 'Surfinia Bouquet Red' exhibits a true red color atop a charming bouquet of flowers.



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