

NEW VARIETIES REVEALED

Hundreds of new introductions made their debut at the 2017 California Spring Trials. We certainly can't share them all with you, but here are some of our favorites.

By Jasmina Dolce

Calling All Pollinators

Pollinator health continues to be a major concern across the industry, from growers all the way to end consumers. There are many programs and organizations at various levels that encourage building pollinator gardens. This is certainly a great cause to inspire fun POP displays.

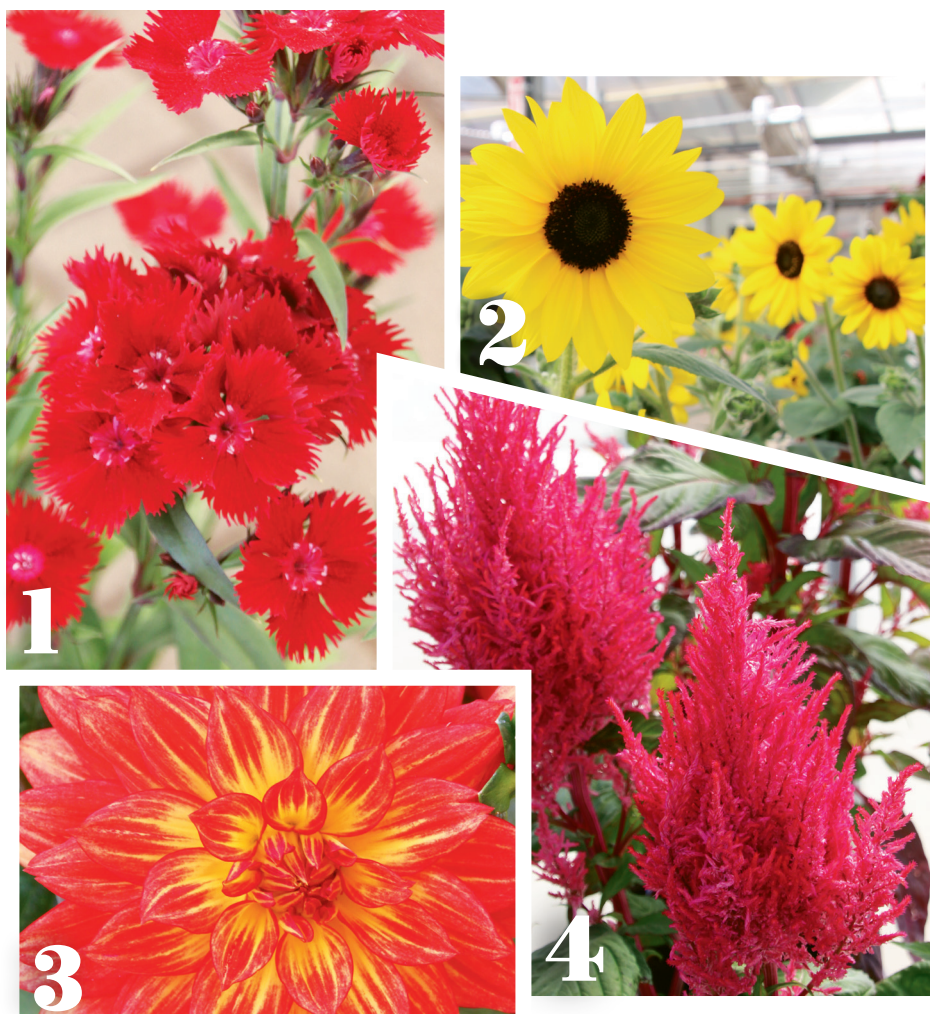
1. Salvia 'Rose Marvel' by Darwin Perennials is an eye catcher with large flowers and an intense rose-pink color. It features a long flowering window and reblooms without being cut back.
2. Suntory Flowers remains a strong supporter of the Pollinator Partnership, donating a portion of its sales of Beedance bidens. A new addition to the lineup, 'Beedance Yellow' presents a cheerful yellow color dense plant.
3. Dümmer Orange's lantana 'Havana Pink Sky' boasts bold colors on a tight habit. Plants are outstanding landscape performers and will stand up to both heat and drought.
4. The ageratum Bumble series, bred by Westhoff, adds vibrancy and flower power to heat-tolerant summer collections. Unlike seed varieties, Bumble will thrive throughout summer without blooms turning brown.



Stars, Stripes and Splashes of Color

Consumers seem to love anything that sets them apart from their neighbors. So when it comes to gardening, they love outrageous colors and patterns — flowers that are truly unique and fun. Breeders are definitely in tune with the trend and are introducing more unusual patterns that demand attention.

1. Marketed as the earliest petunia series in the industry, Benary's SUCCESS! series now has a unique bicolor, Pink Star, in the uniform and top-quality seed collection.
2. Verbena 'Lapel Mickey Red Rose' (Cohen Propagation Nurseries) adds an interesting and eye-catching bicolor to the lineup. It has a fine leaf, making it more mildew resistant. It is an early-flowering selection.
3. Westhoff's Chameleon calibrachoa series marks an industry first with its plants that continually change color. Consumers will love the unique blend of colors on a single plant. 'Chameleon Lavender Sorbet' is an improved variety for 2018.
4. Petunia 'Headliner Pink Sky' now joins the popular 'Headliner Night Sky' (Selecta). It matches its predecessor with flower timing and habit, and will create amazing baskets and large pots.
5. Popstars is a new F1 hybrid phlox series from Floranova with a fantastic show of star-shaped flowers. The compact habit and strong branching ensures great garden performance and amazing flower power.
6. 'Cascadias Purple Gem' joins Danziger's collection of premium trailing petunias. The white star pattern on purple blooms is very stable, and the plant is extremely weather tolerant.



Cut Flower Comeback

For a while there, it seemed that cut flowers were becoming forgotten or typically a last-minute thought for consumers. However, judging by all the cut flower displays we admired along the coast, they are definitely making a comeback. Breeders are coming out with more varieties that gardeners can bring indoors to beautify their homes' interior spaces.

1. 'Rockin' Red' dianthus, bred by Kieft Seed, is a perfect plant for borders. With its vivid, scented blooms and durable performance, consumers will love bringing this plant indoors.
2. One of the most exciting new introductions this year was 'Sunfinity' sunflower by Syngenta Flowers. It is a great way to get consumers to grow their own cuts, and 'Sunfinity' is supported by a consumer website as well as branded tags and pots.
3. Dümme Orange continues to expand its XXL dahlia series, which features extra-large bicolored flowers that are perfect for cutting. The new 'XXL Tabasco' is pictured.
4. Sakata's 'Century Pink' celosia presents large, abundant plumes on stronger, longer stems. It is easy to grow and maintain, and it loves the heat.

Breeding Breakthroughs

While this year may not have seen as many new introductions as years past, it seems breeders are hard at work developing never-before-seen genetics. At many of the stops, we kept hearing the phrase: "This is the very first [fill in the blank] on the market." It was very exciting to witness the release of so many new breeding breakthroughs.

1. Ball FloraPlant's Bloomify is the first certified sterile lantana series, which means it will not cycle out of color or go out of flower in summer heat. It is nicely branched and will have a nice appearance at retail.
2. The lavender Madrid series by Green Fuse Botanicals now has a subseries, Lavish, which is being promoted as the first "double lavender" with multibracted flower heads. These lavenders are very showy plants with an excellent habit.
3. Promoted as the first true yellow cosmos, 'Lemonade' (Thompson & Morgan) is striking with its masses of yellow and white bicolor blooms. It continuously blooms throughout the summer, creating quite the display.
4. The Obsession Cascade series by Syngenta Flowers is the first trailing verbena from seed, so it offers flexibility and makes production easier to execute. It is ideal for premium baskets and combinations.
5. PanAmerican Seed's oregano 'Kirigami' is the first ornamental oregano from seed. It is the perfect patio plant and features large purple-green bracts. 'Kirigami' is not edible, but it has a slight fragrance.



Coral Craze

Each year, one or two colors usually stand out while viewing all the new varieties at each stop. One color that definitely stood out was coral. Hues of salmon to peach to orange were everywhere, and it's really no surprise. Coral is such an uplifting color that presents a gorgeous contrast to foliage.

1. Hardy to Zones 4 through 8, lewisia 'Constant Coral' from Terra Nova Nurseries blooms and reblooms from spring to fall. It is easy to grow in gardens or containers and prefers full sun.
2. Kientzler added Mango Punch to its Unique series of calibrachoa this year. It features a tropical appearance and compact growth habit, and will perform well in containers.
3. Canna 'Toucan Coral' (Proven Winners) is a free-flowering thriller for containers and landscapes. It has tropical salmon-pink flowers that attract pollinators. It is both heat and disease tolerant.
4. Westhoff has added begonias to its lineup this year. The hybrid 'RiseUp Coral Reef' features smaller flowers that won't fall off or drop. It is ideal for quarts or baskets.
5. New Guinea impatiens 'Impacio Orange Star' (PAC) is an excellent plant for both sun and shade. It will suit the premium container market with loads of blooms at retail that fill out pots perfectly.

Fragrance Matters

It seems like fragrance had taken a backseat to breeding for other characteristics in recent years. But judging by the number of scented blooms we came across along the coast, fragrance is making a strong comeback.

1. *Lavandula multifida* 'Blue Torch' (Hem Genetics) is not as hardy as most lavender species but it can be treated as an annual and performs well in the landscape or mixed containers. It has silver-gray fern-like foliage that is oregano scented.
2. Plant Haven's new Magnifi Scent series features perennial violas with an excellent flower count. A popular variety was Sunny Jim because its color has previously been difficult to achieve in the perennial viola category.
3. *Petunia* 'Evening Scentsation', bred by American Takii, is a 2017 All-America Selections winner with a low, spreading habit reaching a height of 4 to 8 inches. Flowers have a scent similar to hyacinth and are shades of indigo.
4. The begonia Sweet Spice series (Cultivaris) features fragrant flowers on compact, well-branched plants. They ship easily without breaking apart. **LGR**



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