

seriously simplified

In April, we headed to California for Spring Trials to see the latest and greatest that the breeding companies plan to bring to market in the next year. For every annual trip down the coast, I have my sights set on new introductions, great displays that could be implemented in your garden centers and themes we hear over and over again.

This year one word stood out to me: simplify. Breeders are streamlining their offerings, removing plants that no longer have a place in the market and consolidating some of their series.

As a consumer, this was a welcome message. I'm guessing you have heard of the concept of "choice overload," coined in 1970 by Alvin Toffler to describe how "the advantages of diversity and individualization are canceled by the complexity of buyer's decision-making process."

Sometimes having too many choices confuses customers and prevents them from making a purchase.

I heard this firsthand about our industry when I was telling someone in my building about the California Spring Trials trip. The whole concept of plant breeding was foreign to her — although she does garden — and she could not believe that there are so many new plants each year. Then, the following words came out of her mouth and stung me a bit: "A lot of times I don't buy anything because I'm not sure what makes one plant better than the other when they look the same."

We know the value of some genetics over others, and there is no doubt that new varieties are crucial to our industry, but if we're not communicating these benefits then what is the point?

For this reason, I was also excited to see simplified and concise messages throughout Spring Trials. Breeders made it clear what were great gift items, what worked best in small

containers, what was perfect for fall and so much more.

Turn to page 20 to see some of the merchandising concepts that caught our eye on the trip. Then, next month we'll show you new introductions that you'll want to add to your lineup soon.

final chance

Talking about merchandising concepts, you're running out of time to submit your entry for Lawn & Garden Retailer's 2018 Merchandiser of the Year competition. Let's say you're reading this issue on June 1 — it is the June issue after all — then you have three weeks to send in photos of your incredible displays.

The winner will receive the Dramm 60127 display, with a retail value of \$1,400; a \$500 wholesale gift credit and a 15 percent discount for Braun Horticulture's 2018 Catalog offering; and, maybe most importantly, bragging rights.

The winners over the years have varied greatly. Last year, the multi-store Al's Garden Center in Oregon took the top honors with its pollinator-focused displays. In 2016, the winner was Distinctive Gardens in rural Dixon, Illinois, which changes its entire garden center theme on a quarterly basis. While in 2015, Molbak's in Washington claimed the title with a farmers market theme for its vegetable department. The possibilities are endless!

You have until June 22, 2018 to submit. Head over to page 27 or www.lgrmag.com/merchandiser-of-year for all the details, and feel free to email me at akleckler@greatamericanpublish.com if you have any questions.

Good luck!




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