



FLOWERS TO CAST YOUR EYES UPON

We hit the California Spring Trials in April to see what new flowers would be offered to commercial growers in 2023. Can't you just picture them in your own garden center?

By Stephen Kloosterman

The Benary and Benary+ CAST'22 exhibition in Watsonville, California.

“What is hip?!” funk band Tower of Power famously wondered in a song. It's a good question. Everyone, from plant breeders on down to marketers and retailers, wants to know what's hip. Whether it's next season's floral print tops, the latest year of muscle car, or the flowers with which consumers will decorate their gardens this summer, retailers want to know ASAP. Trade shows around the country give curious eyes a peek at what's new on the market.

Well, as Lawn & Garden Retailer's green goods editor, my colleagues and I were very fortunate to attend the California Spring Trials (aka CAST) in April to see the best and brightest plants available for 2023.

While no two of the new plant varieties we saw looked quite alike, we did notice some general trends or themes among the plants offered by the breeders for commercial growers. For example, dianthus, begonia and salvia were all quite popular.



CUT FLOWER RESURGENCE

There was a decided emphasis on cut flowers at several stops. While COVID-19 disrupted imports and supply chains, it also pushed or allowed more workers to spend more time at their homes, and the cut flower industry appears to be on the up and up.

Independent domestic growers are supplying more cut flowers via direct sales and partnering with local flower shops.



Snapdragon 'Opus III Pink' Syngenta Flowers

Syngenta Flowers showed off several varieties for its cut flower program, including snapdragons, dahlias and sunflowers. Snapdragon 'Opus III Pink' (shown) was among the cut flowers at CAST that wowed attendees. Also of interest from Syngenta were delphiniums such as the Excalibur series and zinnias 'Uproar Rose' and 'Zowie Yellow Flame'.



Sakata's cut flower lineup.

Lisianthus Voyage 3 Sakata

Sakata debuted lisianthus Voyage 3 for cut flowers. Voyage 3 is ready for harvest in 22 to 24 weeks and its stems grow to 24 to 36 inches. The champagne-colored double flowers are larger and with a higher petal count than its predecessor, Voyage 2. In addition to the new variety, Sakata also debuted new colors of its other lisianthus series, including Mariachi, Voyage 2, Rosanne 2 and also its *Matthiola incana* stock Quartet.



Ptilotus 'Matilda' Benary

A notable new addition to **Benary's** cut-flower offerings that debuted at CAST was ptilotus 'Matilda'. Marketed as "the beautiful and sassy sister" of Benary's ptilotus 'Joey', 'Matilda' is for the cut flower market with 3- to 4-inch bottlebrush spikes that are silver with dark neon pink tips. "She's a bit of a wild child and a free spirit," according to a flyer. "She definitely doesn't want to be confined to a pot. She wants to be cut loose. She loves being the center of attention — the star of the show — but she can also be a supportive team player when needed."

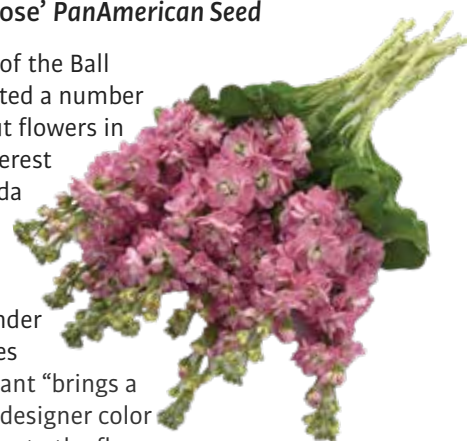


Crane Ruffle Takii Seed

For those looking to add a brassica to their lineup of cut flowers, **Takii Seed** introduced brassica F1 Crane Ruffle as a new leaf type in their Crane series of cut-flower type of flowering kale. Ruffle features a more vigorous growth habit than the standard and feather leaf kale in Takii's Crane series. Available in Red, Rose, White and Bicolor, F1 Crane Ruffle features "wonderfully ruffled leaf edges," according to the flyer.

'Mathilda Antique Rose' PanAmerican Seed

PanAmerican Seed of the Ball Horticultural Co. debuted a number of new offerings for cut flowers in 2023. Of particular interest was matthiola 'Mathilda Antique Rose', which has been bred for maximum yield and uniform production under moderate temperatures and light levels. The plant "brings a new, highly desirable, designer color to the series," according to the flyer.



DIVERSE DIANTHUS

Some of the most exciting and varied entries at CAST were in the dianthus genus, with several breeders showing off the diverse and beautiful traits of their plants.



Dianthus Best Friends Forever Series Westhoff

Westhoff's dianthus Best Friends Forever series is being marketed as the perfect potted gift item. Plants are loaded with flowers and available in six different colors (shown here in combo with each other). BFFs are easy to produce and continuously bloom and re-bloom with little or no effort for the grower or gardener.



Dianthus 'Falling in Love Rosie' Ball Ingenuity

Dianthus 'Falling in Love Rosie' by **Ball Ingenuity** is being marketed as the first hanging basket-type dianthus on the market. It fills out its containers quickly and features beautiful bright-pink blooms that cascade over the side of containers. It offers repeat blooming from spring through summer for a lasting stream of color.



Dianthus 'Constant Cadence Potpourri' Green Fuse Botanicals

Green Fuse Botanicals' dianthus 'Constant Cadence Potpourri' is full of shades of pink, rose and orange throughout the plant. Recommended for early spring through spring in containers, the variety is very heat tolerant and will continue to flower even when temperatures rise. Constant Cadence can then be planted in the garden for use as a seasonal perennial. It features "extremely unique color-changing blossoms" and is "easily programmed for year-round sales," according to Green Fuse.



Dianthus 'American Pie Berry à la Mode' PlantHaven

PlantHaven showcased 'American Pie Berry à la Mode', a new hybrid dianthus. Named for its white flowers with magenta centers, it also features blue-green foliage and long, sturdy stems. The American Pie dianthus collection is "a beautiful new set of hybrid pinks, with amazingly delicious colors," according to PlantHaven.

BEGONIAS BE BREEDIN'

Hybrids and other begonia innovations at CAST showed how much breeders still can do to find unique plants in the genus.



Begonia 'Citizen Cane Pink' *Green Fuse Botanicals*

A new hybrid addition to **Green Fuse's** Lifestyle Collection, Citizen Cane is the first in its series. It excels both indoors and outdoors. It has dark foliage with a striking pattern of white "eyes," and beautiful pink flowers with strong fragrance all growing season.

SALIVATING FOR SALVIA

The diversity of the salvia genus was on display at CAST, with many breeders including unique plants in their presentations. The ability of plants in the genus to thrive under a wide range of conditions makes them a desirable choice for many gardeners.



Salvia 'Sallyfun Blue Lagoon' *Danziger*

Salvia 'Sallyfun Blue Lagoon' from **Danziger** has rich, blue flowers that last through the summer season. It is a heat-tolerant salvia that has an early and uniform bloom with strong radial branching. Pollinators love it and so do home gardeners because it is easy to grow.



Begonia 'Hula Red' *PanAmerican Seed*

PanAmerican Seed's Hula is a highly branched plant with many small flowers and a trailing habit that makes it a good fit for baskets and containers. It is extremely early to flower and begins to spread at an early stage. Colors include Red (shown), Pink, Blush and Bicolor (red and white).



Salvia Salgoon Series
HilverdaFlorist

HilverdaFlorist's Salgoon series is fast-flowering and vigorous with many side shoots. Plants grow uniformly and have a heavy bloom set. A great garden performer, it is also a hummingbird and bee attractor. Five new colors are available: Lake Garda, Lake Titicaca, Lake Onega, Lake Victoria and Lake Baikal.

Salvia 'Ping Pong'
Jaldety Nursery

A butterfly attractor, **Jaldety Nursery's** salvia 'Ping Pong' is easy to care for and requires little maintenance. It has dark raspberry pink flowers that stand out on the green foliage. 🌱

