

new looks @ SPRING TRIALS

Check out what's trending from this year's California Spring Trials.

Each spring, our team heads west for an action-packed week of new-variety trials along the California coast. Starting in Vista and ending in Santa Cruz, we traveled more than 1,000 miles and learned about new breeding breakthroughs and marketing concepts.

We know not everyone can make it to Spring Trials each year. That's why we make it our job to snap as many photos as possible, so we can share all the latest trends and introductions with you. You can see many of these photos on www.CaliforniaSpringTrials.com. Read on to learn about some of the trends we came across during our week-long journey.

Next month, we will give you an overview of some of the new variety introductions from the 2013 Spring Trials. **LGR**

INTERSPECIFIC GERANIUMS

One of the biggest trends I noticed this year at the trials was the amount of introductions in the interspecific geranium category. A few years back, Syngenta kicked off the hybrid craze with Calliope and Caliente, and now it looks like they have some competition!

1-3) At the Fides location, we were introduced to Oglevee's new 'Boogalo', 'Dixieland' and 'Groove'. They all have a nice shape and stay neat and compact in baskets.

4) At Ball, Selecta introduced the Double Take series, which boasts a very high flower count on extremely durable plants.

5) Dümme's new interspecifics really caught attendees' attention with their unique bicolors. 'Sarita Sunstar Red' has an intense pink and red combination.

6) Proven Winners announced this year that it will be adding Syngenta's Calliope and Caliente geraniums to its collection but with new names: Boldly and Timeless.



OFFBEAT COLOR

Petunia, calibrachoa and verbena are probably three of the most common annuals sold at retail. Gardeners love these crops — they are reliable and customers know what to expect from them. It can be tricky to stand apart with such a common crop, so it seems breeders are focusing on new, unique colors in these categories.

1) One of the first petunias that caught our attention at Spring Trials was Ball FloraPlant's 'Cha Ching Cherry'. This versatile and grower-friendly plant has deep cherry-red flowers with a light yellow star.

2) Danziger's petunia 'Cascadias Indian Summer' is a vigorous plant that gives a pleasing display in hanging baskets. Flowers bloom yellow and later mature to peach.

3-5) Kermit is a new series by Westflowers, which is attracting attention with its green-edged flowers. It is grower and consumer friendly and is available in three colors: Piggy, Rose and Baby.

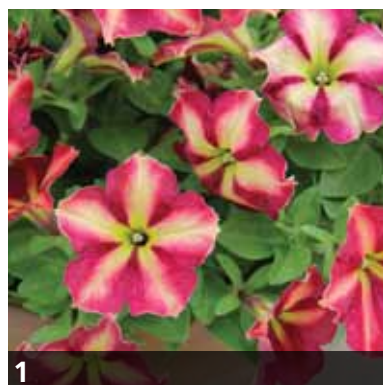
6) Green Fuse Botanicals has added some fun colors to its Good and Plenty line of petunias. 'Good and Plenty Peach' features a soft peach color with light yellow in the center.

7) In calibrachoa, Dümmen's new Hula series features tropical bicolored flowers with an appealing "hoop" of color. They have a semi-upright growth habit and work well in stand-alone baskets.

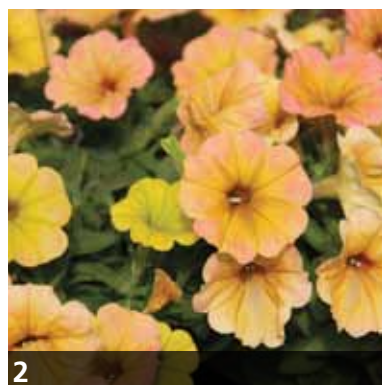
8) Proven Winners has added more colors to its popular Superbells line of calibrachoa. Pomegranate Punch features the same dark eye as the other Punch varieties with a true deep-red outer petal.

9-10) In verbena, Syngenta added two new colors to its Lanai Twister series. They are truly unique novelty colors that can be used to diversify pots and baskets.

11-12) This year, Dümmen introduced its Wicked series of bicolored verbena. Available colors are Blue, Hot Pink, Pink Pepper and Purple. These beautiful plants will add a unique touch to combination plantings.



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FUN FOLIAGE

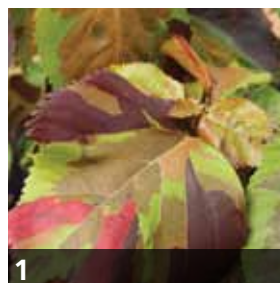
Over the past few years, I've been noticing more and more foliage varieties being introduced. They make an excellent component in mixed combinations and can be just as diverse as bedding plants. It seems like breeders are adding new, fun colors to traditional foliage plants.

1) Hort Couture always displays unique varieties. This year, one of the most interesting introductions was acalypha 'Jungle Cloak'. It has spectacular leaf colors that range from copper to brown.

2) At Skagit Gardens, we were really impressed with brunnera 'Silver Heart'. It has thick and tough foliage and can hold up to heat and humidity.

3) The Royal Hawaiian colocasia at Plant Haven are always fun to look at and touch. 'Hawaiian Punch' has tropical green foliage with an attractive red margin and red veins held on glossy red stems.

4-5) Greenex had some of its sansevieria on display at its trials this year, and it seemed like every attendee was impressed. These plants are easy to grow and quick to finish. And you can get as fun as you want with them!



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EFFORTS TOWARD MARKETING

Aside from breeding, many companies are packing their products into branded programs or putting their efforts toward marketing to the consumer. They want their message to go through all channels, from grower to retailer to consumer.

1-2) At Suntory, we learned about their YESS program, which stands for Your Easy Suntory Solutions. They have a new website (www.suntorycollection.com/YESS) where growers and retailers can print out their own material to display with Suntory plants.

3-4) At Syngenta, we saw tons of great retail programs. Twist It Up is a program promoting the Lanai Twister verbenas. And DeckOrations is intended to package patio-ready products for the consumer looking to make a statement in their outdoor living spaces.

5) Sakata has done very well marketing its SunPatiens brand, so now the company is also focusing on other brands such as its SuperCal petunia-calibrachoa hybrid. They are coming out with branded containers and tags, and even a website for SuperCal.

6) HGTV displayed its Expressions Annuals Collection for 2013, which is a solutions-based program designed to drive sales and build loyalty to the HGTV Home Plant Collection. Within the collection, there are specific groups like Chic Black & White and Friendly Fusions.

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