

SCENES FROM THE TRIALS

Check out some of the trends we saw along the California coast this spring.

By Jasmina Radjevic

Each spring, we roadtrip along the California coast to visit with the many breeders and suppliers exhibiting at the Spring Trials. It's sort of like floriculture's "fashion week." This is where the new varieties and big trends in the industry make their debut. We know not everyone can make it to the Spring Trials each year, so we try our best to

snap as many photos as possible so we can share all the latest introductions with you. Here's a breakdown of some of the hot trends we came across during our week-long journey. You can see additional photos of the displays and new varieties from the 2012 Spring Trials on our Flickr page at www.CaliforniaSpringTrials.com.

The Power of Presentation

Sometimes, unfortunately, it just doesn't matter how great a product is on its own; it needs to be packaged appropriately to grab consumers' attention. Breeders who understand this concept are developing new ideas to gain appeal at the retail level.

Greenheart Farms is known for its vast rose production, and they created wonderful retail displays to showcase the new ways in which roses can be merchandised. Roses can be used for all holidays and seasons!

At the **Suntory** stop, we were introduced to a new bedding plant mandevilla: 'Sun Parasol Garden Crimson'. This naturally compact variety is bred to be produced in 4-inch pots. Growers can choose to use the Sun Parasol branded pot or tag.

A new exhibitor this year was **HGTV**, which debuted its Home Plant Collection. With 95 percent consumer brand awareness, shoppers will be drawn to these new products at garden centers. The launch currently features annuals, mixed containers and hanging baskets.

Burpee Home Gardens is adding more to its BOOST program of nutrient-high vegetables. Three new tomatoes are now available in the collection, including 'Tasti-Lee'. BOOST is supported at retail with free POP, extensive advertising and promotion and the Burpee Garden Coach.

Plant Performance

It's no secret that growers, retailers and consumers alike want varieties that will work for them. If these varieties don't perform, no one will be back to buy them. So breeders are hard at work making sure their varieties are going to perform from the growers all the way to the consumers' gardens.

American Takii's big introduction this year was the Trilogy series of petunias. These petunias will spread 30 to 36 inches and grow 15 inches tall. In packs, they are much more compact, but when grown they have that same mounding habit as other petunias.

Great Balls of Fire is a new series of ivy geraniums bred by **Dümmen**. They exhibit all the favorable characteristics of ivy geraniums, but, they are highly heat tolerant. They have strong foliage and excellent branching.

Benary tried something new this year and presented its varieties by application and region. Obviously, certain plants do well in certain regions. So to make the growers' decisions much easier, they created displays that showcased their varieties in the appropriate setting.

At the **Ball** stop, we couldn't help but notice the beautiful landscape filled with colorful dianthus, which had taken quite the beating after heavy rainfall. But they still showed brilliantly! Selecta's new Everlast dianthus has the flower power of an annual but the hardiness of a perennial, and they ship in full color.



Burpee Home Gardens



Suntory



Greenheart Farms



HGTV



Selecta



Benary



Dümmen



American Takii

New Novelties

Young consumers love to differentiate themselves from the older generation. So when it comes to gardening, many of them are drawn to more novel varieties. We saw plenty of new novel introductions at the 2012 Spring Trials, so it's apparent that breeders are also seeking out ways to differentiate themselves from the competition.

Calibrachoa 'Superbells Lemon Slice' by **Proven Winners** has a totally unique color pattern. It has the same strong performance and disease resistance as the other Superbells varieties.

Westflowers had a new petunia collection on display called Crazytunia. Just as the name dictates, these flowers are wildly striking. Although Crazytunias are available in Canada and Europe, the company is still working on a U.S. release.

Hort Couture always has some of the most diverse introductions each year. One of the most eye-catching varieties we saw at its stop this year was primula 'Blue Zebra'.

Last year, **Fides Oro** had a soft launch of its Mystic Mums program, but this year it's in full effect. Of all the new introductions, this might be the most interesting. 'Eventide Coral' is a bicolor variety that boasts a deep coral center with light pink outer petals.



Fides



Hort Couture



Westflowers



Westflowers



Westflowers



Proven Winners

Plenty of Perennials

In the past few years, I've noticed the perennial category growing in popularity among consumers. And after visiting with all the breeder companies at the 2012 California Spring Trials, it's obvious they're taking notice as well.

Breeders are getting creative with their perennial offerings, too — with new colors, new shapes, better performance, etc.

Green Fuse Botanicals introduced its new perennial program, First Light Perennials. Each variety in the collection is first-year flowering and requires little or no vernalization. The collection includes varieties like gaura, gaillardia, veronica and leucanthemum.

Taking coreopsis breeding to the next level, **Danziger** introduced 'Solanna Golden Sphere'. This variety has truly stable, double, ball-shaped blooms. At 14 inches tall, this dwarf coreopsis requires no PGRs.

Florist Holland had some new spider-type gerberas on display, which are part of their Garvinea line of perennial gerbera. These rich, lush, versatile plants are well-suited for gardens, patio containers and borders.

One feature at the **Plant Haven** stop that I always look forward to is the "sneak peeks" of new, experimental varieties that are still in the works. Here is leucanthemum 'Real Glory'. We'll wait and see if it makes the cut as an official introduction next year!

Another sneak peek at Spring Trials was the new Belarina primula at **Skagit Gardens**. These plants have tidy clumps of brightly colored flowers on top of bright green foliage.



Green Fuse Botanicals



Florist Holland



Skagit Gardens



Danziger



Plant Haven



Plug Connection

WITH A SIDE OF VEGETABLES

Looking for more of what's new in the world of edibles? Well, you're in luck. In our May issue of *Lawn & Garden Retailer*, we highlighted new vegetable varieties and delicious merchandising techniques from Spring Trials. Visit www.LGRmag.com to see more.

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