



**Left to right:** The innovation and thought put into container gardening this year was superb. Companies were doing more than simply combining upright, mounding and trailing varieties in one pot; Small-space gardening features plants with a lot of impact and drama that consumers could put together in containers on a deck or a small plot of land; Halloween-themed displays and containers were popular this year; Some companies chose to set up garden and landscaping displays that showed how consumers can incorporate varieties and outdoor living items in their own yards.

# Trends At Every Stop

There was a lot of information for retailers and growers alike at the 2007 California Pack Trials. From marketing ideas to variety trends, there was plenty for everyone to take in this past April.

By Meghan Boyer and Catherine Evans

A crew from *Lawn & Garden Retailer* made our way from San Diego to San Francisco for the California Pack Trials last April. We noticed again this year that companies are integrating more into Pack Trials than ever before: What was once a strict variety comparison has become a must-see event for marketing ideas and unique displays along with new varieties, which there were actually fewer of this year than in years past. Overall, there was plenty for retailers and growers alike to benefit from and learn at the event.

2007 was a year for locations to try new and different ways of displaying varieties and delivering information. There were a lot of new ideas at every stop. We also noticed companies are doing more than ever to anticipate and meet consumers' wants and needs. As a result of this focus, a number of trends — from marketing ideas to hot new variety colors — popped up among the different trial sites.

## Consumer-Related Trends

The number of mixed containers we saw at Pack Trials is a reflection of how popular the trend is with consumers. In fact, it is difficult to think of a stop that didn't show at least a few containers. The innovation and thought put into them was superb; companies were doing more than simply combining upright, mounding and trailing varieties in one pot.

Another consumer-oriented trend was incorporating outdoor living scenarios into the displays. Some companies chose to set up garden and landscaping displays that showed how consumers can incorporate varieties and outdoor living items in their own yards. Other companies let attendees experience the lush, relaxing outdoor living setups themselves.

Many companies addressed consumers who like to garden but don't have a lot of space to do so, a segment of shoppers many garden center retailers



**Left to right:** Fides North America's children's coloring kits are ivory-colored ceramic pots with animal designs that children can color with crayons and slip a plant into; Varieties in the cyclamen Super series from Schoneveld Twello b.v. have a real European essence to them, and the company has developed some innovative packaging and retail concepts to make them both retailer and consumer friendly; Greenex has been working with Dutch breeder Knud Jepsen to gain market share with its kalanchoes by selling them in six packs instead of as individual plants. The packaging was very eye catching and had an easy handle to carry; One of the most fun displays at Goldsmith Seeds was of the Bada Balls. They are metal ball statuary pieces with the new begonia Bada Bing and Bada Boom series in them.





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are interested in attracting. Among the many different garden settings created was a small-space garden featuring plants with a lot of impact and drama that consumers could put together in whatever available spaces they have, whether it's a few containers on a deck or a small plot of land.

### Variety Trends

High-impact color is the focus for 2007: Rich, saturated hues were popular among the new variety introductions. Blooms with abundant color were arranged en masse at many of the stops, creating an eye-catching blanket of color.

Of the colors, orange emerged as the must-have variety color. Several stops identified it as a new color trend and showcased some orange varieties. Other locations had a number of colorful holiday themes. For instance, a Halloween-themed landscape display used orange pansies planted in the shape of Jack-o-lanterns with deep-purple pansies fill-



**Top:** The Suntory Collection offered continuous-blooming containers. They are mixed combinations filled with violas and petunias. The violas start off the season with some great color, while the petunias wait for the weather to get a little warmer and brighter. **Bottom:** Cohen introduced an interesting new petunia called Mini-Me that looks very much like a calibrachoa but is all petunia blood.

## PACK TRIAL COMPANY CONTACT INFORMATION

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### Floranova

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### GGG International

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### Golden State Bulb Growers

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ing in around the pumpkin shapes was a major one.

### Programs Galore

In touring the different facilities, we saw an assortment of herb and vegetable programs. Stops featured large displays of different herbs and vegetables with many interesting varieties. We were even encouraged to munch on a few leaves to experience them for ourselves! Other companies featured displays of organic herb products, and some incorporated recipe and cooking ideas into their herb and vegetable marketing materials. Many consumers are interested in organic products, and this trend is a great way to give them what they want.

To help growers, retailers and consumers make the right variety choices, companies were also grouping together season-specific crops, focusing on those that would work well in heat or cool. Many companies created programs that grouped



**Top:** These landscape gerberas from Northern Innovators are good for putting in the garden and can be used as cut flowers for the house. **Bottom:** Dümmer USA introduced the new calibrachoa Aloha series that has interesting pot and point-of-purchase materials to go with the varieties.



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plants with similar temperature requirements together. There was an emphasis on creating exciting variety displays that help extend the selling season into spring.

A primary example is the Fourth of July marketing theme that was represented in everything from complete programs to mixed container designs at different stops. A number of companies developed their Fourth of July programs specifically for extending sales through the summer; the programs consist of varieties that can take the summer heat. Many of the other stops used the theme to show how plants can be combined and upscaled in containers for consumers to purchase for festive decorations.

## Making Choices Easier

The overall emphasis at the different Pack Trials stops was on making choices easier for everyone and keeping product offerings manageable. This also was reflected in the many new “best of the best” programs we saw. Whether dubbed elite, tried and true, top 100 or something else, these different programs typically consist of selected varieties that meet each company’s respective criteria. In some cases, the programs include point-of-purchase materials for retail.

## Seeing Is Believing

Pack Trials had a great show this year and there were so many new and



**Left to right:** Proven Winners featured extremely visually appealing landscape exhibits with an artistic theme. The display area was segmented using a huge red wall to create unique vignettes to showcase the varieties; Hishtil Nursery had some concept gardens that were herb gardens that catered to people who use herbs in salads, barbecuing, beverages, etc; The new ShockWave petunia from PanAmerican seed is small and great for baskets. It looks even better and more eye popping in the pink hanging basket as well; Plug Connection has been working on an organic program for independent retailers. The program consists of vegetables in biodegradable pots with signage.

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exciting things to see. We have chosen a few of the varieties and ideas that really stood out to us for retailers to look at for the 2008 season. It is more of a photo gallery, so if you want more details about the programs, please refer to the sidebar (where we have listed all of the companies that exhibited at Pack Trials) on pages 36-37 for more information. You can also contact the companies themselves for a more in-depth look at Pack Trials to learn about all of the new varieties, programs and ideas they presented this year. ☼

Meghan Boyer is associate editor and Catherine Evans is managing editor of Lawn & Garden Retailer. Evans can be reached at [cevens@sgcmail.com](mailto:cevens@sgcmail.com) or (847) 391-1050.

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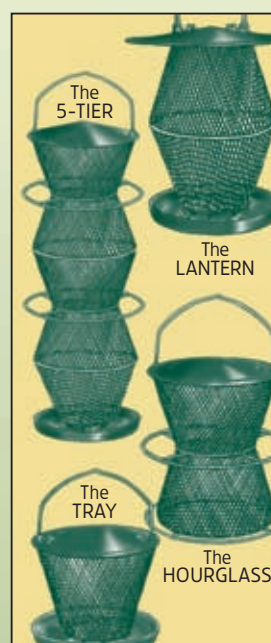
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