

vegetative matters

the pack trials

COMPANION COVERAGE

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New at the Pack Trials

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Mimulus — The Flower Fields

PACK TRIAL CURIOSITIES

Details on some of this year's new vegetative introductions.

By Rick Schoellhorn,
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I selected the following plants because they are easy to produce or offer a very specialized look. All of these plants have a place in the component plant world and most will add something different to any container. This is by no means all of the incredible new crops I saw at Pack Trials this year but a good sampling of some new directions in crop development.

ANGELONIA

I need to start with Angelonia, even though we did a feature article on this plant in the March issue, because within the last year, many major suppliers have introduced Angelonias. The Angelmist series from Ball Floraplant is the only series I have trialed. It is a very strong series and a huge leap in genetics. However, I'm really looking forward to seeing how the new series compare in our 2003 trials in Florida.

The Flower Fields released the Carita series, and plants looked very strong, with good, new colors. EuroAmerican/Proven Winners released the Angelface series, which had some of the largest flowers I have seen. Flowers were so close to overlapping that the plants resembled a small Delphinium. Angelonia seems to be getting better with age.

SEDUM

Succulents is one of the most interesting groups of plants returning to the market. With all the drought issues, I suppose it was a natural fit, but I think there is a lot of promise in

these plants. They tolerate full sun, extremely dry conditions and a lot of customer abuse. The only drawback is they are intolerant to low light and wet feet.

EuroAmerican/Proven Winners is releasing Sedum 'Angelina', a green-gold sedum with a loose growth habit. Ball FloraPlant is releasing 'Coral Reef' and 'Sea Stars'. Sea Stars is a very fine-textured, gray mass that forms a globe as it spills over the container. 'Coral Reef' has a coarser texture and looks like the old 'Dragon's Blood Sedum' but with refined foliage.

I really think there is a lot to be said for reintroducing these plants — they are tough and many are cold-hardy. For Southern growers, these should be considered a spring crop, as rains and high night temperatures are usually pretty tough on sedums.

Sedums will be the focus of trialing in Florida next year to see if we can find some heat and humidity tolerance in the group. Also, check out the living succulent wreathes made by a variety of suppliers, as an example of how you can market these plants.

Production guidelines for Sedum:

Fertilization. Liquid feed at 150-250 ppm on alternate waterings. Slow-release can be used at low rates. Too much fertilizer results in weakened growth and increased fungal problems.

Watering. Water only when dry. If a lot of roots form above the soil, you are applying too much water, and plants will ship poorly and break more easily.

Media. All commercial peat lite medias work fine, pH 5.8-6.8.

Production Temperatures. Range from 55-85°

F. Faster but more elongated growth at high temperatures.

Light level. Full sun or as bright as you can make it. Once hardened, sedums can take intense light and still grow well.

Propagation. Cuttings. In most cases, each leaflet will root and form a new plant.

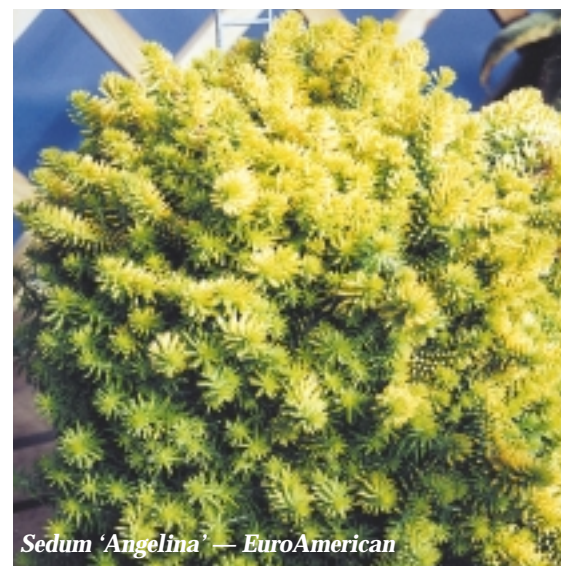
Crop timing. One-gallon container takes 5-7 weeks from rooted liner. Eight-inch hanging baskets (three liners per) take 8-10 weeks. No pinch required.

Flowering. Spring flowering. Flowers are a bonus but not always spectacular.

Common problems. Few pests, just watering-related problems.

THUNBERGIA ALATA

Thunbergia alata, the Black Eyed Suzie Vine, is making a comeback. You can still buy seed ▶



Sedum 'Angelina' — EuroAmerican

vegetative matters

for this old-fashioned annual, but the vegetative forms have superior quality, with larger flowers and reliable colors. This plant fell out of favor over 10 years ago and is now back in such high demand that almost everyone ran out of stock before the season got started. It is a good, easy plant for hanging basket and trellis production. Just don't let it get away from you. This is a fast-growing plant with twining stems that needs support immediately after planting. *Thunbergia* are available from Horticultural Marketing Associates and Ball FloraPlant, as well as many seed companies throughout the United States.

Production guidelines for *Thunbergia alata*:

Fertilization. Liquid feed at 150-250 ppm or low to medium levels of slow-release. Over-fertilizing delays flowering and produces more growth than you'll be able to handle.

Watering. Keep evenly irrigated. Repeated drought stress will cause leaves to yellow, and it is difficult to get back a good green. Micronutrient solutions can help if this becomes a problem.

Media. All commercial peat lite medias work fine, pH 5.6-7.0



Thunbergia alata — Ball FloraPlant

Production Temperatures. Grows well from 65-80° F. Faster but more elongated growth at high temps with increased chance of spider mites.

Light level. Full sun.

Propagation. Seed or cuttings.

Crop timing. One-gallon (on trellis) takes 5-6 weeks from rooted liner. Eight-inch hanging baskets (three liners per) take 6-8 weeks. No pinch required. You can pinch all you want, but it will simply keep growing!

Flowering. Flowers continuously all summer. Flowering reduces if plants become root-bound or drought-stressed.

Common problems. Spider mites, thrips, rarely mealy bug.

Note: If you like *Thunbergia*, look for *Thunbergia battescombeii*, with royal blue trumpet flowers and a good basket habit.

ANIGOZANTHUS HYBRIDS — KANGAROO PAW

Wherever people see this unique plant they do a double-take. Kangaroo Paw looks like an iris but flowers with small, fuzzy clusters of very long-lasting, brightly colored blooms in tones of orange, red and yellow. Larger cultivars make excellent specialty cuts or landscape plants in cool, dry climates. Bodger Botanicals has two types: the Kanga series, which is a bit larger and good for landscape and large mixed containers, and the Joey Paws, with a more compact habit best suited to 4- and 6-inch production. These are high-dollar, show-stopper flowering plants that can help establish a market niche.

Production guidelines for *Anigozanthus*:

Fertilization. Use a low-phosphorus formulation for best results. Liquid feed at 150-200 ppm or a low level of slow-release. Intermittent clear water irrigation will help keep salts low.

Watering. Allow plants to dry slightly between waterings. If light levels or temperatures are low, this becomes even more important. Avoid afternoon watering. When plants begin to actively grow and set flowers more water will be needed.

Media. Fast-draining, peat lite media. With a pH of 5.5-6.5, avoid heavy mixes with poor air exchange.

Production Temperatures. Day temperatures of 65-75° F and night 60-65° F.

Light level. Bright light, 1,500-3,500 foot candles, is essential for strong plants. Cool conditions with high light levels are ideal.

Propagation. Although seed for *Anigozanthus* is available, germination and growth are fairly specialized, so most growers will choose liners.

Crop timing. From liner, 1-gallon takes 12-16 weeks, 2-gallon takes an additional four weeks.

Flowering. Flowering under short days, reinforced by cool nights.

Light Level. High light.

Problems. Rust, Pythium and Alternaria. Use copper-based fungicides.



Anigozanthus — Bodger Botanicals

Chase's Fungicide Rotation Guide

FIRECRACKER FUCHSIA

Tucked away in a corner of Oglevee's retail display was a plant that never gets enough press. A variegated form of Fuchsia 'Gartenmeister Bonstadt', it is renowned for its heat tolerance and has definite possibilities for U.S. production. Green leaves, margined in cream and wine tones, with vivid red-orange flow-

ers make for an eye-catching combination. Because this is a mostly upright form, it makes a great component plant for shady containers. Definitely one for the cooler-climate people to make the most of, and hopefully we will see some performance in the South.

Production guidelines for Firecracker Fuchsia: This plant can be grown under the same

conditions as any other fuchsia with excellent results.

REVENGE OF THE MONKEY FLOWER

Monkey flowers, *Mimulus* hybrids, were always a bit finicky when I was growing up in California but worth the trouble because of their huge, colorful flowers. They look like an *Angelonia* on steroids, with blooms up to three inches. Sakata's line of Mystic annual *Mimulus* are very strong-flowering plants with large flowers. They are great in baskets and unusual enough to stop customers. This is an exceptional group for nurseries in cooler climates. Colors include: yellow, white, bicolor, red, orange and rose shades.

The new Jelly Bean series from The Flower Fields appears to be derived from a native *Mimulus* species that grew on the coastal cliffs in Central and Southern California. In general, these plants have a much different habit than the annual types, more mounding with spiked flower clusters and an overall larger size. There is still a bit of cultural work to be done on the Jelly Bean series, but with good drainage and some patience, these will be excellent plants for the West and South.

Production guidelines for *Mimulus*:

Fertilization. Liquid feed at 150

ppm or low rate of slow-release.

Watering. Keep evenly irrigated. Avoid drought stress, which leads to leaf drop and overall loss of vigor.

Media. All commercial peat lite medias work fine, pH 5.6-7.0


Production Temperatures. Maintain 55-75° F days with cooler nights.

Light level. Full sun best, the mystic series might benefit from shade.

Propagation. Seed or cuttings. Seed is usually pelleted, as it is very fine.

Crop timing. Scheduling Mystic from plugs is similar to most fast-cropping bedding plants. Jelly Bean is a bit more uncertain; 1-gallon could take 8-12 weeks, with at least one pinch.

Flowering. Peak flowering in spring but also into the summer.

Common problems. Spider mites, nutritional disorders, over-watering. 

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Figure 1. Additional crops debuted at 2002 California Pack Trials.

CROP	COMMENTS	SUPPLIER
<i>Salvia patens</i> 'Blue Angel'	Intense sky blue; good form; very nice.	Benary Seed
Nolana 'Blue Eyes'	Petunia-like with succulent leaves; very interesting.	Bodger Botanicals
<i>Platycodon</i> 'Astra Lavender'	Semi-double; new color; strong plant.	Dæhnfeldt
<i>Torenia</i> 'Pink Moon'	Wave-type growth; big flowers; very attractive.	Danziger
Sweet Caroline <i>Ipomoeas</i>	Especially the bronze, is a new color; all good.	Bodger Botanicals
Stained Glassworks <i>Coleus</i>	This is a great selection with some novel forms.	The Flower Fields
Dazzler <i>Cleome</i>	Huge flowers, great colors, strong habit, great!	Goldsmith Seed
Olympus <i>Streptocarpus</i>	Vigorous plants, unique colors, lots of impact.	Oglevee
<i>Spilanthes oleracea</i>	Button flowers in brown to yellow, very different.	PanAmerican Seed
<i>Petunia</i> 'Famous Apricot Pink'	Unique color, very striking flower.	Selecta Klemm
<i>Petunia</i> 'Merlin Blue Morn'	Morn-type color pattern with denim blue flower, nice.	Sakata Seed
<i>Helichrysum</i> 'Rose Shades'	Totally different than other <i>Helichrysum</i> ; small multi-flowered, vigorous.	American Takii
<i>Calibrachoa</i> 'Mini Milky Way'	Tiny flowers in pale blue cover this plant, looks like a very robust <i>Calibrachoa</i> but heat-tolerant.	Twyford Labs
<i>Ozothamnus</i> 'Silver Jubilee'	Fascinating twisted growth habit, grey foliage, killer component plant.	Yoder Brothers



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