



By Meghan Boyer and Catherine Evans

Last month, we told you about the overall trends from Pack Trials 2007 and highlighted the best and most interesting aspects from each stop. This month, we're focusing on varieties: new varieties, new trends and more. Even though the exhibiting Pack Trials companies are incorporating more and more into the stops each year, the varieties are still the stars of the show.

### Slimming Down

Some Pack Trials stops, such as Selecta First Class and GroLink, chose to mostly display only the new varieties and not the entirety of company offerings. We heard different explanations for this choice. Some companies wanted to highlight what was new and not overwhelm attendees with too much to take in, while others wanted to show the crème de la crème of their products.

These sentiments were echoed by many of the companies that chose to retire a number of varieties as they introduced different ones: This year, GroLink introduced 170 new products and planned to drop 80, Selecta introduced 61 new varieties and removed 71 and Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm added 56 new varieties and dropped 25.

The overall emphasis was on making choices easier for growers and keeping product offerings manageable. This also was reflected in the many new "best of the best" programs we saw during Pack Trials. 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 material for retail. Sakata took the focus a step further and chose not to introduce new varieties at all, instead centering on educating growers about the company's existing products.

### Big Color, Little Size

Rich, saturated hues were popular among the new introductions. Blooms with abundant color were arranged en masse at many of the stops, such as Ball FloraPlant, creating an eye-catching blanket of color.

Of the colors, orange emerged as the must-have

variety color. Ecke Ranch identified it as a new color trend and showcased some orange varieties at its stop. Other locations, such as PanAmerican Seed, incorporated the color heavily into its displays and mixed containers. For instance, a Halloween-themed landscape display at PanAmerican used orange pansies planted in the shape of Jack-o-lanterns with deep-purple pansies filling in around the pumpkin shapes.

While flowers were big on color, many of them were small in size. Notably, the petunia Mini-Me series from Cohen Propagation Nurseries features natural petunias with very compact growth and small flowers. Though it looks similar to a calibrachoa, it is pure petunia genetics.

### Programs Galore

In touring the different facilities, we saw an assortment of herb and vegetable programs. Pacific Plug & Liner featured a large display of different herbs and vegetables with many interesting varieties. We were even encouraged to munch on a few leaves to experience them for ourselves! Plug Connection featured a display of organic herb products, and other companies incorporated recipe and cooking ideas into their herb and vegetable marketing materials.

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 plants with similar temperature requirements together.

### See You Next Year

The 2008 California Pack Trials is closer than you think. Eight months can pass by very quickly in this industry. In the meantime, visit [www.gpnmag.com](http://www.gpnmag.com) for easy access to all the GPN Pack Trials coverage. If you'd like to share your 2007 Pack Trials experiences with us or your plans for 2008, E-mail [thodson@sgcmail.com](mailto:thodson@sgcmail.com).

**Meghan Boyer and Catherine Evans are associate editors of GPN. Evans can be reached at [cevans@sgcmail.com](mailto:cevans@sgcmail.com) or (847) 391-1050.**



*Top left: Ball FloraPlant featured displays of blooms with saturated hues arranged in eye-catching blankets of color. Above, top to bottom: Plug Connection featured a display of organic herb products; PanAmerican Seed featured the hot variety color of the season — orange — in a seasonal Halloween display; Selecta chose to display its new varieties and not the entirety of company offerings.*