

# Learning Something New



Bridget White, Managing Editor  
(847)391-1004 • bwwhite@sgcmail.com

**A**tending the California Pack Trials for the first time is quite the experience — one definitely in the best interest of every grower, regardless of production size. Aside from the hospitality and the lush displays and the chocolate chip cookies, the Pack Trials provides a wealth of information, ideas and experience that simply cannot be retold, even in the best of magazines (though we at GPN will be doing our best over the next few months; see page 22).

One of the things from this year's Pack Trials that has stuck with me is the number of new varieties being offered this year. Not just new colors or "improved" varieties, but entirely new lines and completely refabbed varieties. There are plants on display at the Pack Trials that you don't see in the average spring bedding plant mix — great plants that have been around for years but never became popular, plants that growers could easily use to distinguish themselves from the rest of the pack.

Another facet of the Pack Trials that I as a relative "newcomer" noticed is the whole idea of the Pack Trials. Let's not fool ourselves; the seed companies are there to convince us that their product is superior and should be favored by you, the grower. That's how they make their money, but what benefit do they get out of telling you about the shortcomings of their varieties? What benefit do they get out of sponsoring trials to show which PGR works best on their product? And they do things like this.

All of the seed companies I spoke with said that their function at the Pack Trials was 1) to showcase new varieties and 2) to help growers produce a better product. They are there to educate. The trials at Takii, for example, featured a demonstration about applying PGRs to ornamental cabbage. Daehnfeltdt featured products that could be marketed in 6-inch decorative pots to an upper-end market. Sakata shared their research on height control of campanula.

Visitors who took the time to fully explore each Pack Trial location walked away with some valuable knowledge that will benefit their growing operation. As hokey as it might sound, they walked away a little more educated.

## FOCUSING ON RESEARCH

I bet most of you thought you were through being educated once you graduated from college. And now, you go to as many educational conferences each year as you can. You find yourself eager to hear details of the latest research on mite control or propagation techniques or raising worker productivity. Everyone in this industry believes in continuing education, not just the people at the Pack Trials.

There is an ongoing debate in the academic community about what to do with continuing education credits. They are trying to decide if the current method needs to be changed, but no one is suggesting eliminating the concept. In fact, there has been a push over the past couple of years to move away from trade shows and toward educational conferences. You'll even see GPN supporting this move by co-sponsoring, with Syngenta, two sessions at the FarWest in August.

We've lined up Ann Chase and Jim Bethke to speak to growers at that show about managing pests and diseases in the greenhouse. Growers continually tell us that this is their number one problem, and we couldn't think of a better way to help than to make two "A list" researchers available to growers. You can find more information about the conference and the seminar on page 62, and Jim Bethke has an article about leafminers on page 44 if you are not familiar with him and his research.

If you have any questions about the seminar or would like to reserve a seat, please feel free to contact me at the number above.

*Bridget C. White*

## next month ...

Roger Styer gets a jump on poinsettia production

Ann Chase reviews the latest in powdery mildew control

Jim Faust covers plant responses to light

Jim Barrett reports on PGR usage

John Dole reviews the 2000 cut flower trials

## plus ...

Nutrition information for pansies

Evaluating the cost effectiveness of subirrigation

Continued Pack Trial coverage

Secrets of the second runner-up in the GPN/MasterTag Marketing Innovation Award