

Pick of the Pack Trials, Part II

If you're in the market for new varieties, we searched the Pack Trials for those with the most promise.

By Carrie Burns, Catherine Evans and Bridget White



Last month's Pack Trial article covered new seed introductions as well as some of the most important trends from this year's Pack Trials. This month, since there are so many vegetative introductions, we wanted to focus exclusively on the plants.

Vegetative does seem to rule the Pack Trials these days, and with four more vegetative companies to visit than seed companies and more than two times as many introductions, it's easy to see why. There *was* a lot of great material introduced this year — everything from standard vegetative geranium lines to the most exotic interspecies hybrids. The following is just a sampling of what we saw during our 10 days in California. For a complete listing of new introductions from each company, contact the breeder/marketer companies individually; contact information is provided on page 45. We've also included a few more introductions from our faithful traveling companion, Rick Schoellhorn, in his column on page 22.

Argyranthemum (Ecke)

A new exciting argyranthemum series from Ecke Ranch is taking the "mum" to the next level. The Summersong series is a fully double compact series that has three colors: White, Rose and Primrose and a whole bunch of breeding to back it. This series is an improved branching version of Summer Melody that remains more compact. If the breeders stay on top of their game, Ecke could easily become known as the leaders in argyranthemum.



Argyranthemum 'Summersong White'

Summersong has an upright mounding habit that needs just one pinch. It is grown cold for eight weeks for a full flowering effect. These season extenders work best in 4- to 6-inch pots. The plants should be grown in the early cool to main growing season in temperatures of 50-60° F. If need, PGRs can be used but no Florel is recommended.

Aster (Yoder Brothers)

What? No mums from Yoder? We decided to change things up a bit this year and give credit to the other active area of the Yoder breeding program: asters. Yoder has admittedly not done much work with asters

variety information

lately, but they have started aggressively reworking their stock, focusing on longer shelf life, uniformity across series and fully double flowers.

Melody is a great example of this. Its large duplex flowers have multiple rows of petals whose color turns from lavender in full sun to light

California Pack Trials

Vegetative Company Contact Information

Ball FloraPlant

T: (630) 231-3600

www.ballfloraplant.com

West Chicago, Ill.-based Ball FloraPlant has been a driver in the explosion of new introductions, with more than 100 new varieties released each of the past four years, including such innovations as angelonia and trailing snapdragons. Varieties are marketed under the Simply Beautiful name.

Bodger Botanicals

T: (626) 442-6161

www.bodger.com

Bodger Botanicals is an innovator in vegetatively produced items, with more than 200 varieties. The South El Monte, Calif.-based company has developed a reputation for introducing some of the most innovative new species on the market, including anigozanthus.

Cohen Nurseries

T: +972-8-9439487

www.cohennur.co.il

Located in Kfar Hanagid, Israel, Cohen Propagation Nurseries offers more than 600 varieties. Cohen was one of the first companies to begin importing non-patented cuttings. Currently Cohen offers both patented and non-patented varieties.

Danziger

T: (440) 357-6280

www.danziger.co.il

Israel-based Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm has been expanding its product base and now offers a full selection of cut flowers, baskets and bedding plants.

Ecke Ranch

T: (760) 753-1134

www.ecke.com

This Encinitas, Calif.-based company is best known for poinsettias, though it also offers a full line of vegetative annuals. Ecke is a founding member of The Flower Fields.

Fides North America

T: 011 506 442 1849

www.fidesnorthamerica.com

Fides obtains varieties from Fides Goldstock Breeding (FGB) and produces cuttings at its greenhouse facility in Alajuela, Costa Rica. In recent years, its product range has diversified from pot plants such as New Guineas and kalanchoes to bedding plants.

Fischer USA

T: (800) 344-7862

www.fischerusa.com

A partner in The Flower Fields group, Boulder, Colo.-based Fisher USA specializes in geraniums, poinsettias and New Guinea impatiens. Fischer is best known for producing one of the most com-

plete lines of vigorous New Guineas but has recently made headlines for striking an agreement to market Goldsmith vegetative varieties.

Hishtil Nurseries

T: +972-3-9373148

www.hishtil.com

Hishtil Nurseries develops vegetatively propagated herb and perennial material. Based in Israel, this breeder/supplier specializes in non-patented material.

Jackson & Perkins

T: (800) 386-4495

www.surfinia.com

Jackson & Perkins, is the U.S. marketer for the Suntory Collection. Suntory is an international company with roots in Japan's brewing industry. Suntory breeds vegetative plant material, such as the first popular calibrachoa series.

Oglevee Ltd.

T: (800) 437-4733

www.oglevee.com

Oglevee, based in Connellsville, Pa., specializes in breeding and producing geraniums, New Guinea impatiens and poinsettias.

Proven Winners

T: (573) 635-2877

www.provenwinners.com

Proven Winners is an international marketing cooperative comprised of some of the industry's leading propagators. Proven Winners develops color varieties of vegetative annuals and most recently perennials and shrubs.

Selecta First Class

T: (800) 955-5644

www.firstclassplants.com

Established in Stuttgart, Germany, Selecta is known for geraniums and poinsettias, though its program now includes New Guinea impatiens, calibrachoa, pot dianthus and a growing list of vegetative annuals.

Twyford

T: (800) 905-3263

www.twyford.com

Based in Apopka, Fla., Twyford produces more than 30 million disease-indexed, foliage, ornamental and vegetable starter plants annually for the international horticultural market.

Yoder Brothers Inc.

T: (800) 321-9573

www.yoder.com

Yoder Brothers, headquartered in Barberton, Ohio, specializes in pot plants and mums but has become known as a top perennial supplier through an alliance with Blooms of Bressingham and the growing popularity of Green Leaf Perennials. Yoder is a founding member of The Flower Fields.

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variety information



Aster 'Melody'

habit variation throughout. Now, all three colors are consistent with their upright habit. This Jamesbrittenia type bacopa sports two new colors: 'Breeze Upright Lavender Mist' and 'Breeze Upright Plum'.



Bacopa (Jamesbrittenia) 'Breeze Upright Plum'

blue in shade. Under natural days it will finish in midseason, approximately September 16-23, and does not need to be pinched. If forced, at least one pinch is advised, and for direct-stick cuttings make sure the first pinch is much harder than subsequent pinches. Melody will work as either a summer or fall crop.

Bacopa (Ball FloraPlant)

Many changes made this year in the Breeze series from Ball FloraPlant caught our attention.

The old series, Breeze Basket, had habit variation throughout. Now, all three colors are consistent with their upright habit. This Jamesbrittenia type bacopa sports two new colors: 'Breeze Upright Lavender Mist' and 'Breeze Upright Plum'. The Plum was our favorite because it is such a unique color for bacopa, displaying a dark, dark blue flower with a yellow throat.

Breeze needs 4,000-8,000 foot-candles and day temperatures of 65-75° F and night temperatures of 55-60° F to maximize branching and to encourage the best habit. Four- to 5-inch pots require 1-2 plants per pot and take 5-7 weeks to finish. Six-inch pots require 2-3 plants per pot and take 5-7 weeks to finish. Ten- to 12-inch baskets require 4-5 plants per pot and take 8-12 weeks to finish. Crop

times will be shortest as days lengthen in spring. Generally, PGRs are not needed; however, Breeze is responsive to a Florel spray of 300-2,500 ppm. Pinching may be needed to shape.

Bracteantha (Selecta First Class)

Bracteantha has yet to become a major crop, partly because its lush vegetative growth is so hard to control into a nice color presentation. Plants tend to over-grow flowers and containers and end up a big green mass that's ripe for disease. So when Selecta First Class showed us their no-pinch Mohave series in 4-inch pots that were covered with blooms, we were all ears.

A new series, Mohave has six colors — Grande Autumn Bronze, Golden Yellow, Lemon, Grande Dark Rose, Strawberries n' Cream and Basket Yellow — that range in habit and vigor to offer something for everyone. The series contains both single and double flowers and everything from low to high vigor and upright to mounding habit. This is a series that can be on heavy feed and still present flowers on top of the foliage. Selecta advises to avoid drying out, as it may cause leaf yellowing, and to grow on in cool temperatures to encourage branching, compact growth and flowering. (For more information on this series, see the Crop Culture Report on page 124.)



Bracteantha 'Mohave Grande Autumn Bronze'

Calibrachoa (Selecta First Class, Jackson & Perkins and Danziger)

MiniFamous Sun Pink. We know there are so many calibrachos on the market and a lot more introduced all the time, but 'MiniFamous Sun Blue' and 'MiniFamous Sun Pink' introduced this year by Selecta First Class set

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variety information

a new standard for this crop. Both colors have an early flowering, semi-mounding habit, but it's their vigor and heat tolerance that are really exciting. They start flowering early (not daylength neutral, but pretty low numbers) and continue through the heat of summer, reaching peak in mid-summer everywhere but the Deep South. Additionally, their low vigor and PGR receptiveness make them easy to produce in a 4-inch pot. Finally, a calibrachoa that looks good in a smaller format.

Sun Pink is our favorite because it holds its color better and stretches less, enabling summer production for the fall season. For best results, pinch after planting when new roots start to develop and don't forget that calibrachos like an acid-based fertilizer that will keep pH in the necessary 6.0 range. Finish time from a rooted liner is 8-10 weeks for a 4-inch.

Million Bells Crackling Fire. For a crop that was so new to the market five years ago, the calibrachoa has become *the* crop to grow, and there are more and more exciting colors and habits coming out every year. Another one that caught our eye this year is the new 'Million Bells Crackling Fire' from Jackson & Perkins in the Suntory Collection. There are a lot of yellow, red, orange and peach varieties out there, but this variety really does its name justice. The flowers are a vibrant orange with some striation of dark orange and yellow; something we have rarely seen in a calibrachoa color before.

The plant has a standard Million Bells habit that is upright and mounding with excellent branching and dark green foliage. The growth is very similar to 'Million Bells Terra Cotta' and 'Million Bells Yellow'. Flowers bloom all over the plant, making it full of color, and it can reach 12 inches tall and 24 inches wide if grown in the right conditions. As far as pot production goes, this variety works very well in 4-, 5- and 6-inch pots as well as 10-inch baskets and 1-gal. containers.

Calimor Indian Summer. We have to admit that we fell in love with this calibrachoa purely for its color. Last year, terra cotta-colored plants were all the rage, with varying combinations of orange and yellow. Danziger waited a year to catch that trend and introduced two multi-colored varieties in their Calimor series this year; our favorite was Indian Summer, which sports at least five different color blooms on each plant. Everything from pink through orange to yellow, including bicolor blooms. This plant is a mixed-container dream.

Flowering is early on semi-mounding plants. Calimor takes typical calibrachoa culture so watch the pH and use PGRs liberally.



Top to bottom: Calibrachoa 'Minifamous Sun Pink'; Calibrachoa 'Million Bells Crackling Fire'; Calibrachoa 'Calimor Indian Summer'



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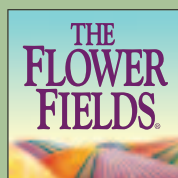


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Hardy ferns

Fern (Twyford)

For the Pack Trials this year, Twyford showcased their new hardy fern line, and it is definitely a foliage plant series to talk about. It is a little different to see some of the companies that we know so well showcasing things other than the typical bedding plants and perennials. Twyford does a good business in foliage material, and this fern line will be a nice addition to that offering. This new line includes such standards as Japanese painted fern, Christmas fern, lady fern, remote wood fern,

tassel fern, Japanese holly fern, soft tree fern, robust male fern, champion's wood fern, hard shield fern, and many more.

This line is recommend for 4- and 6-inch pots and 8-inch hanging baskets. Since it is such an extensive line, there are a number of sizes, forms and habits to choose from, depending on what you are looking for and what will work for your customer base. Another perk about the series is that there are a number of varieties that are quite cold tolerant. These plants are excellent for pot production, and they also work well in mixed containers.

Geranium, Zonal (Oglevee)

The Maestro series was bred for profitable, reliable production. It has low

vigor on the bench but high vigor in the garden. Consisting of seven colors: Red, Salmon, Cherry, White Splash, Pink, Deep Lavender and Rich Red, it has free basal branching and a heavy initial flush of flowers.


One of the most important things you should know about this variety is how fast it is. Transplant rooted cuttings at least six weeks prior to scheduled sale date. Bottom heat is considered essential for meeting the fast-cropping schedule. Night temperatures should be maintained at 65° F, and for day temperatures, do not vent until air temperatures reach 76° F. Maintain a constant fertilizer program of 15-15-15 at 250 ppm nitrogen.


Geraniums, Ivy (Fischer USA)

Fisher, known for its geraniums, did not disappoint this year with a new series featuring a variety of bicolors and growth habits. The new Holiday series: Ruby Dream, Purple Dream ▶




Top: Geranium 'Maestro Pink'; Bottom: Geranium 'Holiday Purple Dream'






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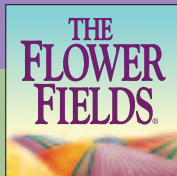
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variety information

and Rose have interesting and eye-catching bicolor flowers. Fischer has put 15 years of breeding work into achieving so many bicolor options, and you can definitely see that hard work in the habit, contrasting color and heat tolerance; the Holiday series is actually more stable in the heat.

'Holiday Purple Dream' has large purple-white bicolor flowers and is a vigorous grower with very stable color. Ruby Dream is an eye-catching dark red-white bicolor. Rose has rose-white bicolor flowers and a nice mounding growth habit.

All Holidays are early flowering and have good heat tolerance. Purple Dream may require a bit more growth regulators than the others, but it has the most stable color and will not revert.

Geranium, Decorative (Oglevee)

'Indian Dunes' is part of Oglevee's Potpourri Collection, which was selected for unique foliage patterns and attractive growth habits. Indian Dunes puts on an interesting display with its bicolored leaves and bright coral flowers. Though it will look great by itself, Indian Dunes is very vigorous so it can keep up with other vegetative material in a combo.

Indian Dunes will finish in a 4-inch pot in 4-5 weeks; 6-inch pot pinched in 6-7 weeks; and 10-inch hanging basket in 8-10 weeks. Pot-to-pot production is recommended for starting the crop; then after 3-4 weeks, it should be spaced to four plants per square foot. If more space is given, or if the crop time is increased, it will reduce your return per square foot.



Geranium 'Indian Dunes'

Heuchera (Proven Winners)

With the recent announcement of the Proven Winners/Color Choice marketing partnership, who would have thought that they would be tackling another product category so soon? Well they did, and this time it is an extensive perennial line. The one that caught our eye the most was the new heuchera hybrid series Dolce. What is most exciting about this new series is its timing: A finished 4-inch plant only takes five weeks.

Dolce consists of three colors of heuchera, all completely different but great as a nice combination. The colors are Crème Brûlée, bronze with purple back; Key Lime Pie, a lime green color; and Peach Melba peach with a red back.

The series was bred by Dan Heims in an exclusive to Proven Winners and is patented to them. It works well in a 4-inch container and can grow to approximately 12-16 inches. The Dolce series can be grown in full sun to full shade and still thrive in the garden. These are some great looking perennials that can help enhance the garden, and make growers more money.



Heuchera 'Dolce Crème Brûlée'

Impatiens, Exotic (Ball FloraPlant)

This new series of exotic impatiens from Ball FloraPlant is great for large containers because of its well-branched, mounded habit. Since it



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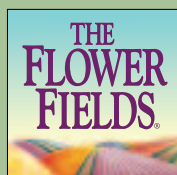
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Top: *Impatiens* 'Fusion Sunset'; bottom: New Guinea *impatiens* 'Sonic Magic Pink'.

is a fast and easy crop, it is a good candidate for early sales. Five colors make up the Fusion series: Glow (yellow with pink blush), Heat (pink with yellow), Infrared (pink, orange and yellow), Radiance (coral with orange) and Sunset (apricot with pink).

This interspecies hybrid can be treated like a Fiesta. A Bonzi spray of 5-15 ppm is effective for height control. A Florel spray of 100-300 ppm can be used to improve branching but will not usually be needed. Start feeding immediately after transplanting. Proper environmental conditions will reduce or eliminate the need for PGRs, but it may need one pinch.

One thing to look for: The foliage likes to grow up over the flowers. It needs to be grown lean to keep flowers on top of the foliage. Maintaining cold nights will also help with this. Hit plants with a Bonzi drench when foliage reaches the side of pots for good presentation at retail.

Impatiens, New Guinea (Fischer)

There is always that one variety that the three of us talk about at the end of a long day of touring. This year we couldn't stop talking about 'Sonic Magic Pink' from Fischer USA. This breakthrough in NGI breeding is a one-of-a-kind pink and white bicolor.

Magic Pink fits well into the Sonic series with a compact to semi-compact habit and flowers up to 3 inches in diameter. Recommended for 4- and 5-inch production, Sonics also work in larger containers, baskets and color bowls.

When finishing Magic Pink, the pH should be 6.0-6.2 (6.3-6.5 in saturated media extract). Watch low pH because of possible iron and manganese toxicity. Keep only slightly moist until the roots are established in the pot. Another important thing to remember is lighting: For ideal vegetative and flower development maintain 3,500-4,500 foot-candles.

Ipomoea (Bodger Botanicals)

Ipomoea or sweet potato vine has become a standard foliage/filler for mixed containers, and the breeders/marketers continue to give us great colors to work with. One of the best so far is 'Sweet Caroline Red' from Bodger Botanicals. A beautiful purple-red color, Sweet Caroline Red fits with



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the series ► (Bronze, Light Green and Purple) for habit and performance and makes a great show.

This is an ipomoea series to keep in mind. It was developed to have short internodes, producing a more compact plant that will not take over a mixed container, and a smaller leaf size. In a 4-inch pot, with one cutting per pot, plants will finish in 4-6 weeks; a 6-inch pot with one cutting per pot will finish in 6-8 weeks. Odema will appear on ipomoea foliage during high humidity, but new leaves will cover stippling. Be aware that leaves start green but color up immediately, especially under high light. One pinch two weeks after transplanting into finish container will produce a fuller plant.

Kalanchoe (Fides)

Calandiva has been around for a little while now and has made a name for itself, winning numerous awards. Just recently at the Super Floral Show in Charlotte, N.C., the Calandiva was awarded Best Flower Pot Plant of the year. We covered it in our Pack Trials article last year, but Fides announced its official introduction into the market-

place this year, so we wanted to share it again. There are 10 colors that make up this pot plant series: Charming Red, Dark Pink, Orange, Pink, Pink Purple, Purple, Red, Soft Pink, White & Pink and White. Its large full flower heads contain rose-shaped flowers that remain for at least six weeks. The bright color of Purple and the soft shades of White & Pink stood out to us.

Finishing time is 13-20 weeks, depending on summer or winter culture. The series is fairly uniform, with the exception of Charming Red, which is moderately vigorous,

and Red, which is vigorous. The series will work in 2- to 6-inch pots. ►



Kalanchoe 'Calandiva White & Pink'

Editor's Picks

Carrie's Favorites

Thunbergia 'Raspberry Smoothie' (Ecke Ranch)

Heuchera Dolce series (Proven Winners)

Calibrachoa 'Minifamous Sun Pink' (Selecta First Class)

New Guinea impatiens 'Sonic Magic Pink'
(Fischer USA)

Calibrachoa 'Million Bells Crackling Fire'
(Jackson & Perkins)



Catherine's Favorites

Osteospermum 'Pinwheel White' (Bodger Botanicals)
—This new osteo variety has a huge, bright white flower, much larger than typical osteos. This variety is just one of many in a new series.

Bracteantha Mohave series (Selecta First Class)

Calibrachoa 'Million Bells Crackling Fire'
(Jackson & Perkins)

Thunbergia 'Raspberry Smoothie' (Ecke Ranch)

Coleus 'Stained Glassworks Schizo' (Ecke Ranch)
—This new variety has a different name, a different splash of color and an even better leaf pattern.



Bridget's Favorites

Phormium Lancer series (Bodger Botanicals)

Calibrachoa 'Minifamous Sun Pink' (Selecta First Class)

New Guinea impatiens 'Sonic Magic Pink'
(Fischer USA)

Torenia Moon series (Danziger/Ecke)

Bacopa 'Breeze Upright Plum' (Ball FloraPlant)



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variety information

Lavatera (Jaldety)

The new lavatera series from Jaldety Nursery (one of the Carmel Agrexco partners from Israel) is a sight to see. The flowers look very exotic, much like an iris, and different than most typical crops we see on the bench today. This niche crop will definitely catch the eye of the consumer. The early flowering series starts off with four colors of Barnsley, white with a red eye; Burgundy Wine, a rich pink with dark veins; Maritima, lilac with pink, white or magenta veins, also the earliest of the series; and Rosea, dark pink with dark veins.

Jaldety's series is more compact than other lavatera and also has an upright habit. It is a frost hardy vigorous shrub that is covered with a good number of flowers from spring to fall. This uniform series has gray-green foliage and grows to approximately 8-12 inches in containers and 2½-3 feet in the garden. This plant can work as a filler in perennial plantings, mixed borders and containers.

Nemesia (Cohen)

Though there were only two colors introduced, Mascara nemesia from Cohen Propagation Nurseries (Another Agrexco partner) made quite an impact. We liked that this nemesia is naturally compact and that it has shorter, thicker stems than most nemesia, but what really caught *our* eye was the dark veining around *its* eye — its mascara, as the name implies. We do hope that nemesia aren't headed the way of pansies, with variety differentiation coming from how many petals are different colors or how large the blotch is, but for now, this is a nice distinction.

Mascara comes in two colors: White and Pink; both have yellow centers and the dark veining

around the eye that looks like lashes. Since this is a lower vigor series, plants work best in smaller 4- to 5-inch pots. These are patented varieties that are only available through Cohen so don't take tip cuttings when you pinch, but to ensure full containers, Cohen includes two cuttings for the price of one and recommends that you stick two per cell.

Osteospermum (Ecke)

Yellow, Orange, Ivory, common colors for an osteo? They are now and Ecke Ranch is responsible for bringing a little more competition to the market with the new Crescendo osteospermum series, bred by Sakata. A direct competitor to the Symphony series from Proven Winners, this heat loving plant is sure to cause quite a stir in the market.

It is an osteospermum x hybrida which makes it more heat tolerant than the typical purple osteos that are meant for the early spring/fall. Crescendo's three colors have an upright habit, a bit more vigor and, of course, heat tolerance. Best of all, the blooms keep their size in the heat and will not get small or fewer in number because of it.

These plants work best in 4-inch pots, baskets and combinations. Ecke recommends it should be grown in mid to late season with an average temperature of 45-55 ° F, depending on pot size and sell date. Crop time for 4-inch is either 6-10 weeks; 8-12 weeks for 6-inch or 1-gal.; and 10-14 weeks for 10-inch hanging baskets or containers. PGRs are recommended but Florel is not, though this series should be pinched at 1-2 weeks after transplant for the appropriate habit.



Osteospermum Crescendo

Phlox (Jackson & Perkins)

The new Astoria phlox series, from the Suntory Collection through



Nemesia 'Mascara White'

It's 10:00 a.m.

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Phlox 'Astoria Cherry Blossom'

Jackson & Perkins (J&P), is one that growers will be very interesting in taking a look at for next year. This phlox series is being marketed as an annual, is very early to bloom and will provide continuous flowering that lasts all season long, according to J&P, though the best show of color is in the spring and fall.

These heat tolerant varieties have the same genetic base as the Intensia phlox series from Proven Winners. They are only available in rooted cuttings because they are somewhat sensitive to rooting, but once rooted they are great performers. The habit is more dense and less like a typical phlox habit, and plants do not *require* pinching but will be fuller if pinched.

There are five colors in the series. Cherry Blossom has the most compact growth of the series. It has light pink blush flowers with a darker pink star-shaped center. Magenta has deep magenta flowers that do not fade, according to J&P. Pink White Star has bright rose/neon pink blooms with a white star-shaped center. Red has deep velvet flowers with a growth habit that stretches more than others in the series, so pinching is recommended. The foliage is more linear and slightly longer than the other colors, making it 1-1½ inches longer. Finally, White has a

little bit more compact habit than the other colors in the series and the foliage is slightly lighter in color. Currently there is more breeding being done with this series to make it more uniform.

As far as growers are concerned J&P is telling us that this series is not nearly as difficult to grow as other phlox varieties. As a matter of fact, it can be grown very well in most common sized pots and in the landscape.

Phormium (Bodger)

Look out mixed containers, height components will never be the same again — phormium has hit with a vengeance. This crop started showing up a few years ago in high-end mixed containers, but with limited availability, in part because it's difficult to root, the prices were too high for mass production. We're hoping that the new and improved Lancer series from Bodger Botanicals will change all that. With three new and two improved colors, this series now has a variety to fit any color combination and enough breadth to accommodate the demand.

Mature plants will reach approximately 3 feet tall so are



Phormium 'Lancer Red'

MasterTag Hanging Basket Collars™

MasterTag now offers two exciting versions of our unique Hanging Basket Collar. Hanging Basket Collars are only available through MasterTag. For more information contact MasterTag at 1-800-253-0439. patent pending.

Our **original Hanging Basket Collar** offers maximum opportunity for use of images and text.

patent pending

best in 6-inch or larger containers, preferably 1-gal. These are Australian natives, so they're very tough — over-caring for these plants is about the only miss-step you can make. Use coarse soil, allow to dry completely in between waterings and feed only every 6-8 weeks for beautiful plants that really impress.

Thunbergia (Ecke)

If you were reading the Pack Trials coverage GPN did in last month's Vegetative Matters, you know that Ecke Ranch has come out with a fabulous new pinkish-purple thunbergia called 'Raspberry Smoothie'. This color is part of a new series called Smoothie that also includes one other color 'Apricot Smoothie', which is a great light and dark orange bicolor.



Thunbergia 'Raspberry Smoothie'

Raspberry is a color like no other to the annual thunbergia family. Typically colors include variations of oranges, yellows and whites, but this color hits the ball out of the park. It is something Ecke is very excited about.

This trendy vine plant, bred by Sahin, has a trailing habit and works best in 6-inch pots or 1-gal. containers with a trellis for support. Smoothie is recommended

for production in the main to late warm season with an 8-10 week crop time for 4-inch; a 9-11 week crop time for 6-inch; and a 10-12 week crop time for 10-inch pots or hanging baskets. The average growing temperature for Smoothie is 65-70° F. PGRs can be used if needed to keep height under control, but Florel is not recommended. There should be one pinch at 2-3 weeks after transplant to promote branching.

Torenia (Proven Winners and Danziger)

Catalina Series. Heat lover, early bloomer, stays in flower longer? At a loss for words? The new vegetative torenia Catalina series from Proven Winners has more seed genetics in it than vegetative so the plants tend to behave better on the bench than typical vegetative torenia varieties and throw more flowers. It is similar to the Moon series (see below) and has the same breeder. This version has an upright mounding/trailing habit that will not get as tangled on the bench.

There are three colors in the heat tolerant series: Blue, Pink and Purple. The Purple is not a common color that we typically see for torenia. It is a deeper



Torenia 'Catalina Pink'

Our **new one piece Hanging Basket Collar** requires no assembly & attaches easily.



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variety information

purple with a lavender/yellow throat; it is not even close to the typical blue varieties on the market.

Flowers will start to bloom early and continue to the fall. This series works great as a 4-inch as well as a hanging basket and groundcover in shady areas. It does best in full sun to partial shade and grows to be approximately 6-10 inches tall.

Moon Series. With four new colors added to the existing six, Danziger's Moon series is now the most complete torenia offering on the market and includes the only white vegetative torenia available. This would be reason enough to feature this series, but the large flowers, great colors and versatility make this series hard to beat.

Great from the main season through the heat and humidity of summer, the Moon series is a little variable in timing and day-length needs, finishing from early to midseason and needing from neutral to

long days. Plants work well in a range of container sizes from 4-inch to 10-inch basket. A 4-inch, with one cutting per pot, finishes in approximately 5-7 weeks; a 6-inch, with 1-2 cuttings per pot, finishes in approximately 8-10 weeks; and a 10-inch basket, with 3-4 cuttings per basket, finishes in approximately 10-12 weeks. The Moon series is co-marketed by Ecke Ranch.



Torenia 'Indigo Moon'

***Zaluzianskya ovata* (Hishtil)**

'Star Balsam' from Hishtil Nurseries (Another of the Agrexco partners) was one of the most unique looking plants we saw on our

trip, and with tender perennials gaining popularity, it was a favorite. When the buds emerge, you see little red specks in the plant. When they bloom, they are white, pinwheel-shaped flowers. So, you often have the red buds and white flowers with red undersides on the plant at the same time. This contrast makes for a very unique plant.



Zaluzianskya ovata 'Star Balsam'

Star Balsam will grow to 12 inches tall x 23½ inches wide. Suitable for 1-gal. production, it should be planted in spring and early summer for summer blooming and finishes in 10 weeks. For active growth, a minimum temperature of 57° F should be maintained. It can be overwintered in a frost-free greenhouse. No growth regulators are needed, but one pinch may be required. GPN

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