

Pack Trials 2007:

New Programs, New Trends, New Methods



At the 2007 Pack Trials, companies incorporated marketing ideas, innovative programs and eye-catching displays along with the new varieties.

By Meghan Boyer, Catherine Evans and Tim Hodson

As we made our way through the California Pack Trials in April, all of us in the *GPN* crew kept our eyes and ears open to find the best information to report back to you. Yet again this year, we noticed companies are integrating more into the California 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.

But while this may not have been a year filled with new introductions, it was a year for locations to try new and different ways of displaying varieties and delivering information. We also noticed companies are doing more than ever to anticipate and meet consumers' wants and needs.

2007 Trends

Mixed containers. There's no doubt that mixed containers are one of the hottest consumer gardening trends right now, and the number of containers we saw at Pack Trials proves it. The innovation and thought put into them was superb; companies were doing more than simply combining upright, mounding and trailing varieties in one pot. For instance, the Suntory Collection created beautiful "everlasting" containers consisting of two varieties. When one variety is strong and flowering, the other is not, so the container is always in bloom. Some companies made mixed containers a large focus at their locations: Fischer USA had a tremendous container display that featured a multitude of combinations.

Outdoor living. Incorporating outdoor living scenarios into the displays was another theme at several Pack Trials locations. 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 the attendees experience the outdoor living setups themselves. At Plug Connection, outdoor lawn furniture, mixed containers and fountains on a deck in the greenhouse let visitors relax in a garden setting. We also saw wonderful outdoor living examples at Fides North America, Proven Winners, PanAmerican Seed and more.

New display ideas. There was an emphasis on creating exciting variety displays that will help extend the selling season. 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. PanAmerican Seed and Dümmen USA developed their Fourth of July programs specifically for extending sales through the summer.

Small-space gardening. Ball FloraPlant was one of the many companies that addressed consumers who like to garden but don't have a lot of space to do so. Among the different garden settings the company created was a small-space garden that featured 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.

As always, we'd love to hear what you thought about the 2007 California Pack Trials. Send your observations to thodson@sgcmail.com.



Above left: Small-space gardening is one of the many trends that companies addressed this year because a lot of consumers do like to garden but just don't have a lot of space. *Top:* There's no doubt that mixed containers are one of the hottest consumer gardening trends right now, and the number of containers we saw at Pack Trials proves it. *Middle:* Many companies used unique displays to showcase their varieties. *Bottom:* Outdoor lawn furniture, mixed containers and fountains on a deck in the greenhouse let Pack Trials visitors relax in a garden setting.