

Stop By Stop By Stop

A Pack Trials Overview, Part II

With more emphasis on programs and elaborate exhibits, the varieties are only part of the Pack Trials story. We have rounded up the happenings at each stop in the company-by-company coverage.

As the *GPN* editorial staff hit Pack Trials this year, each one of us had different questions. What would the companies have to offer? How would each company display its new introductions? What wouldn't we be seeing this year and why? How would we survive the rain and mudslides?

As we threaded our way up the coast, we were treated to a wide array of stops — we saw everything from the elaborate gardens at Proven Winners to the garden center location of Plant Haven to the actual trial at Plug Connection. In fact, one of the best things about Pack Trials is visiting all the different companies to see how each set up its stop and

what kind of news was waiting for us when we got there.

Yes, a big part of Pack Trials is what each of the companies is actually doing. You can find part one of the company review in the June issue of *GPN*. We can certainly say all of the companies were very gracious in their hospitality...even if the weather wasn't.

**By Bridget White,
Catherine Evans
and Tim Hodson**

Companion Coverage

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If you're looking for more information about Pack Trials, check out our archived articles from last month's coverage. At www.gpnmag.com, you'll find information about some of the best new marketing programs, more varieties and an evaluation of new lavenders.

GroLink www.grolink.com

A couple of years ago, GroLink was known only as a mum supplier. The company still sells mums, but thanks to its Pack Trials displays the past few years, no one automatically thinks of mums when they hear GroLink. The branded ColeUSA coleus line continues to grow and gain attention, highlighted by a height comparison trial this year. Also of note from this year's new introductions was a focus on herbs and a new petunia line. Not to forget mums, GroLink celebrated 10 years of Belgium mums at this year's trial.



Hem Genetics www.hemgenetics.com

In its second Pack Trials appearance, German breeder Hem Genetics made a very strong showing, filling up 10 benches. Hem is one of the companies presented by H.F. Michell's at Speedling, and though it is a little difficult differentiating the companies, finding Hem is well worth the effort. Hem focuses its efforts on a few key seed items such as petunia, primula and impatiens, and though many growers have probably not heard of the company, its petunias and dianthus are some of the best available.



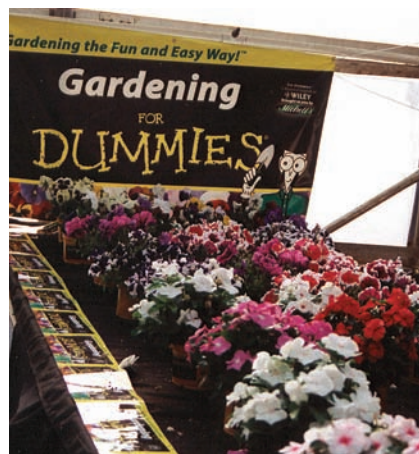
Kieft-Pro-Seeds
www.kieftseeds.com

Kieft Seeds has been in its current location for about three years now: The company fills a greenhouse at Gilroy Young Plants with a full offering of seed perennials and bedding plants. The focus at this year's trial was gerberas. The Revolution series has been expanded, and Kieft now offers gerberas in every shape and size. Last year Kieft focused on annuals such as celosia and salvia; this year, it was on perennials and grasses, especially grasses.



Michell's
www.michells.com

Last year, broker H.F. Michell's debuted the Gardening for Dummies POP program, which received so much attention that the plant introductions were almost overshadowed. This year, Michell's placed all the attention on the plants. Sure, there were still a few neat ideas, such as the MasterTag garden center and an updated Gardening For Dummies, but representatives said attendees were directed straight to the benches. Michell's presented genetics from a number of companies that would not otherwise be at Pack Trials.



Murakami Seed

New to both Pack Trials and the U.S. market, Japanese breeder Murakami Seed was one of the companies presented by H.F. Michell's at Speedling. It's hard to say much about this company since there was not a representative in attendance the day we were there. The plants looked pretty good and included a good variety of standards such as vinca, viola and cosmos. The only new varieties Murakami showed this year were ornamental pepper 'Shu White To Red' and the viola Ai series, with the major emphasis on introducing growers to Murakami's existing offerings.



Northern Innovators
www.northerninnovators.com

Truly a specialty company, Northern Innovators focused its display exclusively on hibiscus. The Klahanie hibiscus program is very impressive, especially the double-flowered varieties. Northern also represents Dutch breeder Florist de kwakel in the United States and Canada and offers an assortment of rooted and unrooted cuttings from a number of major breeders. Northern Innovators is another of the companies exhibiting at Speedling with Michell's.



Oglevee Ltd.
www.oglevee.com

You might think a company with fewer than 10 product lines would have little to talk about. Not true with Oglevee. This was a big introduction year for the company, with two new series and 34 new or upgraded varieties. Additionally, Oglevee has joined the push to develop POP and other programs to help growers be more successful with their products. In fact, the company has made Solenia begonias a lot more attractive with a step-up program so plants finish faster and a full range of POP, from pots to bench tape.



PanAmerican Seed
www.panamseed.com

PanAmerican always puts on a good show, but this year was completely different than anything the company has done before or anything we saw at other stops. Both the trial book and displays contained information to help growers better understand consumers. Included was everything from demographic statistics to marketing ideas. The display provided a great framework for the 80-plus new introductions and gave everyone ample reason to hold on to that trial book!



PlantHaven
www.planthaven.com

This was PlantHaven's first year at Pack Trials. PlantHaven is an independent breeder's agency, representing small breeders worldwide to propagators and distributors. So PlantHaven's reason for exhibiting was to promote some of its licensed varieties to growers. Probably the best thing about the stop, aside from its location in a neat garden center, was the unusual plant material displayed. Among the great crops on display were a new cuphea series being picked up by Proven Selections and a large display of euphorbia.



Plug Connection
www.plugconnection.com

Plug Connection has developed a reputation the past few years as the only independent trialer of seed genetics. Each year the company buys in seed from the major suppliers and grows the plants. New this year was a seed-to-vegetative comparison showing everything from diascia to petunias. Plug Connection has also started providing information about some of its own programs, such as its new organic herb and vegetable program. Certified organic by the USDA, Plug Connection believes the program will soon be a big seller. ▶



pack trials

Proven Winners www.provenwinners.com

Proven Winners (PW) always puts on one of the best shows at Pack Trials. From its creatively displayed varieties to the extensive in-ground gardens to the mock garden center, there is something at this stop for everyone. In what seems to be a never-ending quest to improve its trial, PW changed things up again this year by segregating introductions into groupings backed by great display vignettes — we saw a bed covered in petunias, calibrachos shown in window boxes and cleome as a hedge. While a fairly consistent number of new varieties were introduced, we saw PW continue to expand its species range into several unusual offerings such as chrysocephalum and bergenia.



Sakata Seed America www.sakata.com

For the first time in a long time, Sakata had a clear message at its stop: "Narrow and Deep" selected out specific varieties that sell best, finish consistently and cover most color needs. For the first time in years, pansies did not overwhelm you when you walked through the door, and the plan worked. With fewer of the company's staple crops on display, more attention was directed to crops you might not even know Sakata carries — like begonias, snapdragons and primulas. The other important takeaway from Sakata's Pack Trial is the company's new commitment to supply. We were told if it was on display, Sakata had seed to sell. That is really exciting to hear at Pack Trials.



Selecta First Class www.firstclassplants.com

Selecta's Pack Trial keeps getting bigger and bigger. This used to be the place to see geraniums, New Guineas and calibrachos; now you can practically fill an entire spring line from the company's offerings. The trend continued this year with several new species introductions including argyranthemum, lobelia and angelonia. Of course, the highlight of the trial was Selecta's double calibrachoa (see page 19 for details). Probably the neatest thing about Selecta is that the vast majority of the plants the company markets come from its own breeding program, with only two minor exceptions. This tells you Selecta is intimately familiar with the product and really believes in it.



S&G Flowers www.sg-flowers-us.com

Since S&G's entry into the vegetative market a few years ago, its single greenhouse has been packed full of both seed and vegetative items, making it difficult to distinguish between the two. Not this year. A new set up really put much-needed focus on S&G's vegetative group. The two display houses now mirror one another, with gardens in the front half and benches in the back. It was a smart move, and even with some great seed introductions, the vegetative side really shined. How could it not with introductions like a complete, new series of 50 vegetative geraniums? And while S&G is still filling out its list of standard vegetative items, it is also exploring the market for some completely new crops such as trailing osteo. ▶



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pack trials

Suntory Collection

www.suntorycollection.com

While nearly all Pack Trial exhibitors have started using oversized containers of finished product for their trials, Jackson & Perkins, which showcases the Suntory Collection, has taken this approach to the nth degree. Some of the baskets have been growing for years, making floor-to-ceiling displays. With the waterfall of blue verbe-

nas, the winding dry creek bed and huge plants everywhere, this is a one-of-a-kind exhibit. We're not sure how the theme, The Wizard Of Oz, played into the new varieties, but it was certainly fun to pose with Dorothy and the witches. Among the notable new varieties was a new blue color class hybrid phlox.



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Superfresh Marketing

www.superfreshmarketing.com

New to Pack Trials this year, Superfresh Marketing joins the growing list of brokers/young plant producers that are joining the party. For the past few years, Superfresh has quietly been building a client list that includes some of the largest producers in the country. The company handles genetics from some well-known companies such as Selecta First Class and Danziger but is probably best known for proprietary coleus and lesser-known material from companies such as Hem Genetics and Westhoff. 



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