

Traveling The Coast

A-Z

There is a lot of information to take in at Pack Trials, which is why we brave the trip every year to bring you full event coverage. Learn about the interesting new ideas and varieties the breeder/marketer companies introduced this year in the first of a 2-part series.

By Meghan Boyer, Catherine Evans and Tim Hodson

For the 2007 California Pack Trials, we traveled from just south of San Diego to San Francisco in seven days. We had good times (being in California in April), we had bad times (being cold in California in April), but overall we got to eat a lot, rack up a lot of hotel points and, most importantly, see what was new and interesting at each location.

Below we have gone into detail about each location: what they had to offer for programs, new ideas, displays and more. Enjoy the stop-by-stop information and tune in next month for all of the Pack Trials new variety information.

American Takii www.takii.com

This year, American Takii's Pack Trials theme played well off of its new petunia Opera Supreme series. The theme, Music For Your Eyes, was developed to encompass some of the petunia series Takii has to offer like Opera Supreme and Symphony. There was music everywhere in signage and piped in through the trials.

Takii is famous for its kale, and this year the company used it everywhere. There were some creative gardening beds with the kale mixed in. The stop also had fun mixed-container ideas with kale included. Keep a look out for those consumers wanting more kale; we have already seen it in some garden centers for early spring sales, and it was going pretty quickly, so you may want to add some for the fall.

Ball FloraPlant www.ballfloraplant.com

This year's theme for Ball FloraPlant was Innovative By Design. The varieties, programs, displays and everything in between were designed to help growers and retailers attain success. The one way to do that is by making FloraPlant a 1-stop shop. Every year Ball adds new items to its variety line so it can "fill in" holes.

The displays were very intuitive, showing growers and retailers the details of the company's programs incorporated with the varietal information to give attendees the facts needed to grow and sell the products. There was heavy focus on seasonal plantings as well as the tried-and-true plants that have made FloraPlant so popular. There were also many themed gardens that helped showcase the current consumer trends.

When we visited the Ball Seed area, there were a few things that also caught our attention. One of the programs was Ball Bling. It is a way to add some excitement to plants by painting them or adding a little glitter. The other program was the Circle of Life, which follows the new trend of sustainability and how this industry can achieve that.

Bodger Seeds And Bodger Botanicals www.bodger.com

This year, Bodger did a nice job grouping the appropriate plants and mixes for different sea-

sons of the year. The company also created some very interesting and impressive garden scenes including a home setting complete with front yard to showcase the new varieties.

One thing Bodger has not done a lot of in the past is point of purchase (POP) and marketing materials, but recently it seems the company is doing more with that.

Bodger Botanicals had 11 new introductions, while Bodger Seeds debuted 15 new and improved varieties. Bodger is working hard to make the company bigger and better every year.

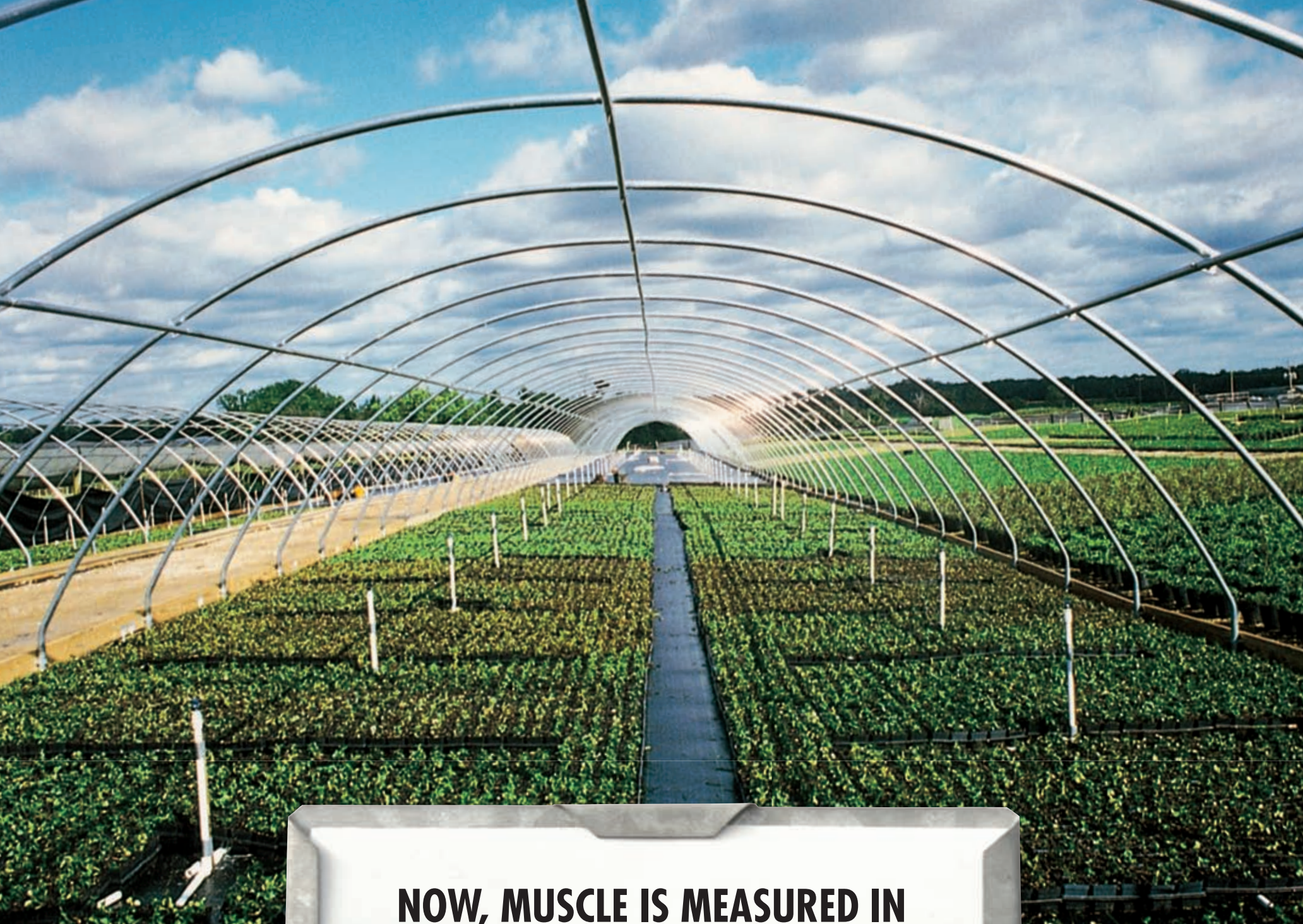
Danziger "Dan" Flower Farm www.danziger.co.il

When we got to Danziger, its staff was very happy to tell us how the Danziger varieties were "tornado tolerant." On April 14, Danziger's Pack Trials site (co-located with Oro Farms) at Headstart Nursery was hit by a mini tornado that literally turned the exhibition upside down and inside out. Through the chaos of the tornado, almost all of the display plants survived. Fortunately, no one was hurt and the staff said with a lot of hard work and help, everything was cleaned up within 24 hours and the show went on with 200 people stopping at the location the next day.

By the time we got to Danziger later in the week, you never would have known anything had happened. The outdoor and entryway displays looked great and the breeder's new varieties showed they could really weather a storm. ♦



Left to right: American Takii kale garden; Ball FloraPlant Blankets of Color theme garden; Bodger seasonal crops; Danziger tornado damage.



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Ecke Ranch

www.ecke.com

Ecke has been busy this past year with the purchase of Oglevee Ltd., and it showed. Though the company didn't have an astronomical amount of new introductions (due to its heavy focus on getting the Ecke Geraniums line up and running from Oglevee), it still had good product to show. One of the things we were most excited about was the amount of gardening ideas Ecke displayed.

On top of the bed plantings, Ecke focused a lot on containers and container recipes. They were outside as part of the landscape and in the greenhouses as part of the new varieties displays. Ecke also is working on upscaling its poinsettia programs. The company is looking into tags, POP materials and interesting pots and pot covers.

Ernst Benary Of America

www.benary.com

This year was a big one for Benary; it introduced some great new genetics, had creative displays and tons of people raved about its graffiti wall up and down the California Coast.

Benary has a great way of tying a lot of unique and creative ideas to its new or not-so-new introductions. The graffiti wall, for example, tied in with the pentas Graffiti series.

The company also had postcards printed with some of its new varieties, and attendees were able to write a postcard and mail them off with a stamp that matched the postcard design.

Benary also does a good job at developing themed gardens in its greenhouse. There were gardens designed for sun and shade, perennials, new varieties, butterflies and more. It was a good place to get ideas.

Fides North America

www.fidesnorthamerica.com

We agreed this year that Fides really outdid itself with new and creative ideas for Pack Trials. The first thing that stuck out was the children's plant kits, which are ivory-colored ceramic pots that have animal designs on them that children can color. After they finish coloring the pots, they can put plants in them. The pots come in branded pot sleeves ready to sell. They have been successful in Europe in recent years and is set to roll out in the United States very soon.

Some other things offered were concept rooms showing that plants are for more than just the garden. There were displays for beauty, wellness, convenience and outdoor living. The company is also working on a project called Diva Kits, which are fancy packages that include a plant and something like a candle or personal care item. The company just has to work out a few details before bringing it to market.

Fischer USA

www.fischerusa.com

After the announcement Syngenta purchased Fischer recently, there was some speculation as to how Pack Trials was going to be this year. Questions were put to rest when we arrived and it was business as usual.

Something Fischer did differently this year was focus a little more on retail. Our tour started in the container garden area, which looked great.

Another part of the retail experience was an entire "store-like" display Fischer developed. It was catered to the big box retailers with bench displays and hanging basket units.

One thing we noticed was the use of the Goldfish fish. Throughout signage at Pack Trials and in the trial book, the Goldfish was "dressed up" according to the type of information he showcased. For example, he was wearing sunglasses



Clockwise from top left: Ecke gardens; Benary's graffiti wall; Fides children's plant kit; Fischer's container gardening.

pack trials

holding a “Heat Lovers” sign for the heat-tolerant varieties (in one of the displays he had on sun-screen and a Gilligan hat), dressed up like the Monopoly man when the company talked about buying power, decked out like Uncle Sam for the 4th of July display and, one of our personal favorites, dressed like a trucker with a hat and sunglasses when Fischer talked about shipping. This was great use of a logo and a neat way to let people know about the different things Fischer offers.

Floranova

www.floranova.co.uk

Since Ecke Ranch purchased Oglevee last summer, Floranova hosted its own Pack Trials this year alone. Without Oglevee, Floranova had plenty of room to spread out and show its stuff. Geraniums and salvia continue to be Floranova’s strongest crops, and the company is seeing growth with its vincas as well, according to Floranova. For some of Floranova’s varieties, we were told there is a “shift toward larger pots” because they are great garden performers and can command a good price point at retail.

Floranova continues breeding heavily in its vinca program. One that is new this year is the Cobra series, which you will learn more about in the July issue of *GPN*. Since this company had the extra room, it was able to do some trialing as well as develop small garden vignettes for attendee ideas.

Golden State Bulb Growers

www.goldenstatebulb.com

Visiting Golden State Bulb Growers (GSBG) is always fun for us. There were mixed containers full of callas as the center plant in pots filled with other great plants. Callas are seen as a more upscale plant, used so often at weddings. Using them in something other than a wedding bouquet is very different and eye catching.

One of the reasons why GSBG decided to go this route is because it is trying to work more

with retailers to develop more ideas like the containers or find out how to utilize the crop and make it more popular with consumers other than as a cut flower.

Goldsmith Seeds

www.goldsmithseeds.com

Goldsmith had retail displays and consumer ideas and introduced the most new series (11 new series for worldwide introduction) of any breeder/marketer company at Pack Trials.

Within the past few years, Goldsmith has been big on retail programs and displays. On one side of the greenhouse, there was POP, benching and more for some of its new and older varieties.

On the other side of the greenhouse were actual merchandised displays. There was a whole “room” set up with plant material as well as gardens that displayed materials for each season with trellises, grass and, of course, varieties. One of the most fun displays that Goldsmith offered was the Bada Balls. Goldsmith planted up metal ball statuary pieces with its new begonia Bada Bing and Bada Boom series and arranged them in a group; they were super cool.

Greenheart Farms

www.dummenusa.com

www.greenheartfarms.com

www.sahin.nl

The companies that exhibited at Greenheart Farms — Dümmen USA, Sahin Zaden, John Henry Company and ITML — did an interesting job of coming together. On top of the new varieties introduced by the green goods companies, the way everything was displayed in such a small space was the real draw here. All four companies came together with their products to make great displays, POP, ideas and more.

It is hard to stress how great the POP, tags, bench tape and signage from John Henry ♦

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Clockwise from top left: Floranova garden; Golden State Bulb Growers combo; Greenheart's Tough As Nails display; Goldsmith Bada Balls display.

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looked and how much it made the displays pop. ITML also supplied the aqua-colored pots used for the new calibrachoa Aloha series from Dümmer. There were neat things coming from the Potunia series and other creative pots Dümmer was using as well.

Sahin and Dümmer came together with their plant materials. Both companies had their own introductions, but they also did some unique containers together. With the perennials and herbs from Sahin and the annuals and poinsettias from Dümmer, there were some fun containers that came out of this stop.

GroLink

www.grolink.com

The theme for GroLink's trial location was "A Taste of Brazil" where attendees were invited "to step into a tropical paradise" and see the varieties. The Pack Trials display had a real consumer feel to it. This was exemplified by the big emphasis on GroLink's new Landscape Elite Program.

The company showcased its Landscape Elite Program. There are more than 95 varieties in this program that are focused on the most reliable plants for the landscape. There is a wide variety of pots, tags, bench cards and other POP materials also available for the program.

More than 50 different 14-inch combination planters were shown as well as a large display of non-flowering/texture-type plants. There was also an outdoor trial garden. GroLink introduced 170 new products this year and plans to drop 80 from its lineup.

Kieft Seeds Holland

www.kieftseeds.com

Kieft Seeds showed its diverse product line. The ColorGrass collection of decorative grasses focused on adding color and texture to mixed containers or landscape applications. There are some appealing POP materials, tags and bench tape to help convey Kieft's message to the consumer.

Kieft's Prime Perennial collection also was expanded this year. The idea is to use the "best

of the best" of these perennials to help extend the selling season past the traditional annual season. Keeping the grower in mind, the marketing programs showed how easy the varieties are to grow and sell.

Pacific Plug & Liner

www.agrexco.co.il

www.ppandl.com

Every year at Pack Trials, Pacific Plug & Liner (PPL) houses the Agrexco companies from Israel — Biological Industries, Cohen Propagation Nurseries, Hishtil Nurseries, Jaldety Nursery and Schwartz Nursery — and each company offered something interesting. This group brings an assortment of varieties and insight to Pack Trials.

Hishtil is mainly herbs, and this year it had some concept gardens that sparked people's interest. There were herb gardens that catered to people who use herbs. Cohen introduced an interesting new petunia called Mini-Me that looks very much like a calibrachoa but is all



Left to right: GroLink Landscape Elite display; Kieft's ColorGrass display; Hishtil's Multicolored Foliage garden; PanAmerican XP display.

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petunia blood. These are just some of the things that the Agrexco companies have to offer when they come to Pack Trials.

One of the things PPL had to offer is its true trials. Each year PPL does a different varietal comparative trial of a number of different breeder/marketers in the industry. This year it did a trial on argyranthemum varieties. For more information on the trials and the Mini-Me series, check out the July issue of *GPN*.

PanAmerican Seed

www.panamseed.com

The displays at PanAmerican were segmented to show growers and retailers how plants can be sold to consumers.

One program that sparked interest was the XP program, which includes impatiens Super Elfin XP and verbenas Quartz XP. The XP program has a grower-focused message that helps take the guesswork out so growers don't have to worry about uniformity, bloom window, color complementing, etc.

One major push is the indoor plant program and the Plant Passport program. These programs are an easy way to get a nice plant grown to give away as a gift.

The Ride The Wave petunia brand continues to build, too. Over the last year, the Ride the Wave fan club and its related Web site have experienced huge traffic numbers and are getting even more popular.

PlantHaven

www.planthaven.com

For the second year in a row, Island View Nursery hosted PlantHaven and its Pack Trials offerings. PlantHaven's folks told us about the different growing tips, landscape suggestions, seasonal topics, and particular cultivar attributes and benefits for the different varieties. Island View Nursery provides PlantHaven with a very unique garden center setting where attendees can see a wide selection of varieties from around the world. Among the great displays were real "beds" of plants complete with pillows showcasing several series.

Plug Connection

www.plugconnection.com

Plug Connection is one of the stops at Pack Trials that is a true trials stop. Each year the location shows how it compares to similar varieties on the market. This year was even more exciting because the company started trialing vegetative material instead of just seed.

Within the last few years, Plug Connection has been working on an organics program for independent retailers. The program consists of vegetables in biodegradable pots with signage. Plug Connection is hoping the program will be off and running by this year and out in full swing by next year's spring season.

One of the neatest things Plug Connection did was develop an entire outdoor living area. It was beautifully done with a wooden deck, artistic fountains, mulch, lounge chairs, umbrellas and plants.

Proven Winners

www.provenwinners.com

Proven Winners' trial location featured ▶



Left to right: Plant Haven bed garden; Plug Connection's organic program; Proven Winners garden; S&G's gerbera Jaguar display.



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extremely visually appealing landscape exhibits with an artistic theme. The display area was segmented using a huge red wall to create unique vignettes to showcase the varieties.

This year, Proven Winners also released a new logo to re-emphasize the company name rather than the initials "PW." It also exhibited its consumer marketing initiatives.

The company plans to roll out a new water-soluble fertilizer soon. Proven Winners had on display a new drip irrigation kit that it plans to have on the market later this year that consumers will be able to buy on the company's Web site.

Proven Winners' displays were great with containers, garden beds and a unique art gallery style of showcasing varieties (thanks to Director of Product Development and Promotion John Gaydos' art school daughter).

S&G Flowers

www.sg-flowers.com

S&G had a wide variety of vegetative and

seed offerings on display. S&G put together some nice retail displays incorporating the varieties with different lifestyle applications.

The company did a good job creating an inviting retail area to help showcase its programs and related merchandising materials. Some programs and POP merchandise on display included Bulbs in the Bottom, Show Your Spirit and A Cut Above.

Like many other breeder/marketers this year, containers were another big emphasis at S&G. They were everywhere. In fact, we were given a handout with 75 different recipes for combination plantings.

Sakata Seed America

www.sakata.com

This year, Sakata's trials were all about answering questions and not introducing new varieties. Sakata was focusing heavily on helping growers and retailers become more profitable.

Sakata wanted to educate growers on existing varieties so they can grow the products

"smarter" and increase profits. This year, the company created its own designer mixes to highlight the existing pansy varieties.

Along with all of its grower education, Sakata showcased a number of interesting garden bed designs, containers and retail displays.

Selecta First Class

www.firstclassplants.com

This year, Selecta introduced a new theme for the trials called The Profit Center 2007. This theme was designed to focus on Selecta's new varieties for the 2007-08 season and the company's new High Density, No Pinch and Sun Lovers programs. The idea behind the Profit Center is to help growers and distributors gain a better understanding of Selecta's products and programs.

This year, Selecta did not do any variety comparisons; instead, it opted to only show its new varieties. According to Selecta, 61 new varieties were introduced while 71 other varieties were removed from its offerings.



Left to right: Sakata pansy mixes; Selecta osteo display; Schoneveld Twello b.v. cyclamen display; Suntory changing season combo.

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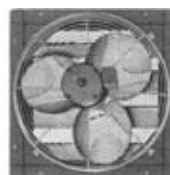
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Selecta also had several technical trials on display, including a soil trial, PGR trial and pinch/no pinch trial.

Speedling

www.ggg-gruenewald.com
www.greenex.com
www.michells.com
www.northerninnovators.com
www.schoneveld.nl
www.speedling.com

Each of the exhibiting companies had its own area in the Speedling greenhouses to showcase their products. There were several companies showcasing materials at Speedling that included Schoneveld Twello b.v., Northern Innovators, Greenex, GGG International and Michell's. Two of those companies with new marketing programs this year were Schoneveld Twello b.v. and Greenex.

Schoneveld Twello b.v. is trying to make its mark in the American market with its cyclamen Super series. The company has developed innovative packaging and retail concepts to make these cyclamen both retailer and consumer friendly. The use of floral gels and attractive containers make this cyclamen series very inviting.

Greenex has been working with Dutch breeder Knud Jepsen to gain market share with its kalanchoes by selling them in six packs instead of individual plants. Some of the other programs included were ceramic and wooden pot programs. Both of these programs were developed for the retail market.

For more information on some of the new plant materials from the rest of the companies showcased at Speedling, check out GPN's July Pack Trials coverage.


Suntory Collection

www.surfinia.com

Despite the sale the week before Pack Trials, everyone at Suntory seemed to have a very positive attitude. As always, Suntory is top notch when it comes to displays.

One of the most interesting things Suntory offered this year was its continuous blooming containers. They are mixed combinations that stay strong throughout the seasons for a good start and finish color. Suntory puts violas and petunias in a pot, and the violas start off the season with some great color, while the petunias wait for the weather to get a little warmer and brighter. When the violas start to die down,

the petunias start to come alive with color in the summer. Then when it starts to get cooler again, the violas reappear for more color.

These days it is all about the new ideas that spark the interest of that consumer and trust us, it really does work. 

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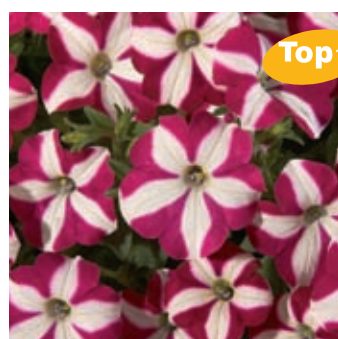
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