

Bringing New Plants to the Market

I started Concept Plants eight years ago to be an independent company to represent breeders for their new plants. I travel around the world to find new and exciting plants, which we can represent for the North American market. Here is the story behind some of our upcoming new plant introductions.

BAMBINI PHLOX

A few years ago we came in contact with Janus Verschoor. One of his successful introductions is phlox 'Peppermint Twist'. During our visit he showed us thousands of seedlings of phlox varieties. We asked if we could go through his field to select new phlox varieties that we could potentially represent world wide. We were looking for varieties that are mildew resistant, compact, self branching and have very large flower heads with vivid flower colors.

In the thousands of seedlings he walked us to the first one. The flower color is vivid fuchsia and it has all the advantages we asked for. When I saw that plant the first thought to pop up was Bambini, and Janus gave us permission to use that name.

After that, he brought us to another seedling. He said this one has the same characteristics so we could make a series. This one has vivid bicolored flowers. 'Peppermint Twist' was the first bicolor, but it doesn't branch and is prone to mildew. This new one, 'Bambini Candy Crush', is self branching and very easy for the growers. The bonus is the sweet scented flowers!

After making those selections, we tested the varieties in containers. They fill up very well in 1-gallon containers and flower the first year. We wanted to make sure that the variety is mildew tolerant. Our trial garden in North Carolina was the perfect place to test it, and we have not experienced mildew.

This year trials will be conducted at multiple locations. Dümme Orange is the source for unrooted cuttings. Next year it will be commercially available.

GAULTHERIA 'PEPPERMINT PEARL'

Special Plant in Zundert (Netherlands) is a specialist in gaultheria. I was invited to view their "secret" area where they are breeding gaultheria. I asked what are their targets? Their goal was to find white, pink and ones that change color through the season. I said that it sounds impossible to achieve! We went together to his secret area. They showed me the first plant of a white berry gaultheria with very big berries on it, I was in shock because that is really a market changer.

After two months I visited again and guess what happened? The berries changed to pink, which was pretty cool to see.

We were thinking about names and asked others also for suggestions. Finally, we came up with the name 'Peppermint Pearl'. They are mainly being used as Christmas gift plants. In the future we will have a complete white and a complete pink, so the series will extend. For Canada, the variety will be available at JRT Nurseries and in North America at Silver Falls Nursery.



PENTASTIC PENSTEMON

A few years ago, I took North American nurserymen on a tour in Europe to show them our new plants.

At a trial field of Gebr Alkemade, I was presenting all of our new perennials as well as perennials from other breeders. One gentleman's eyes kept going to these penstemons. I was a little bit frustrated because they were not our varieties. I asked for the contact information for this variety, which ended up being Fred Yates, a breeder from the U.K. I asked him what the possibilities are to represent them in North America. He needed to think about that and discuss with his local agent.

Finally, after a few months they decided that we could represent the varieties. We suggested some names, but he was not happy with them. I asked him for name suggestions, and he came up with the Pentastic penstemon series. Fred Yates is known for his begonia breeding and all of his selections are successful, so I am very confident in this series. Disease tolerant, programmable for the growers, fast growing, self branching, large vivid-colored flowers. If you prune after flowering, it will rebloom a few weeks later.

Our target is to have flowering plants at the IPM show in Essen next January. If we do, the trade may think they are not real! This year, trials have gone out to several growers to see the performance in the different climate circumstances. The exclusive URC producer is Hishtil from Israël. [gpn](http://gpn.com)



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