

TOP TRENDS AT THE TRIALS

While new variety introductions are the stars of the show, it is easy to note overall trends hitting the market.

Each year, we play a lot of connecting the dots during our coastal journey at Spring Trials. While admiring all the new varieties making their debut, part of the fun is also discovering all the recurring themes and trends at each stop. Which colors are trending, what specific traits are breeders working on, what messages are they marketing to the consumer?

Here are some recurring themes that caught our attention at the 2017 California Spring Trials.

BY JASMINA DOLCE

A YEAR FOR FIRSTS



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At many of the stops, we kept hearing the same phrase: "This is the very first [fill in the blank] on the market." It was very exciting to witness the release of so many new breeding breakthroughs, and there are probably plenty more coming down the pipeline.

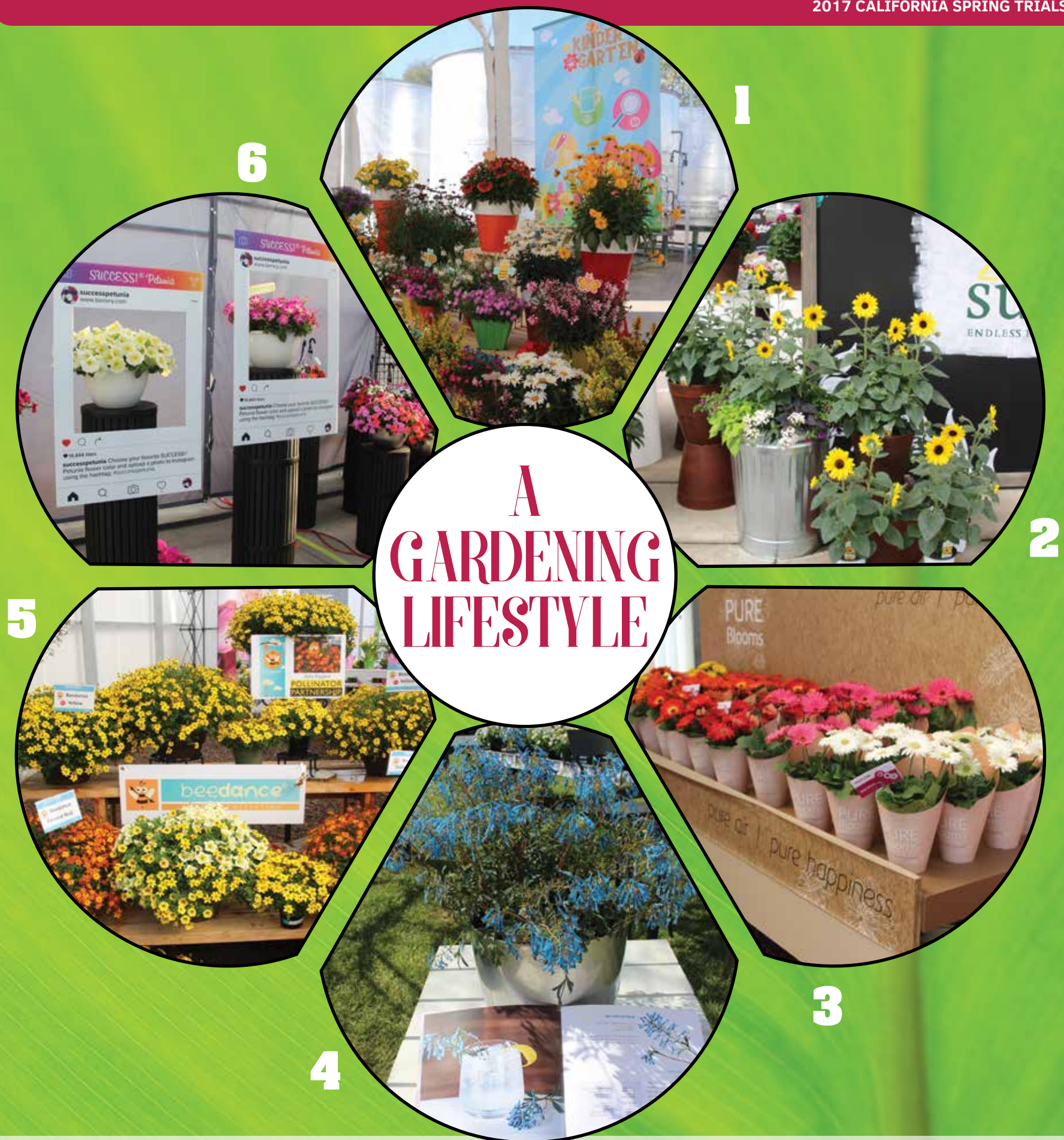
1. The Lantana Bloomify series from Ball FloraPlant is the first certified sterile lantana,

which means it will not cycle out of color or go out of flower in summer heat. It is also a pollinator magnet.

2. Green Fuse Botanicals' *Lavandula stoechas* Madrid series now has a subseries, Lavish. These are being marketed as the first "double lavender" with their multibracted flower heads.

3. Promoted as the first true yellow cosmos, 'Lemonade' (Thompson & Morgan) is striking with its masses of yellow and white bicolor blooms.

4. Syngenta Flowers' Obsession Cascade series is the first trailing verbena from seed, so it offers flexibility and makes production easier to execute. It is ideal for premium baskets and combos.



A GARDENING LIFESTYLE

I must say I'm thrilled that breeders are attempting to connect with consumers more. They are creating a movement that incorporates gardening into everyday lifestyles, enriching the industry as a whole.

1. Dümme Orange brought its Kinder Garden program to North America from Europe, where it's been a huge success. The program instills an appreciation for pollinators and gardening in children and their parents.

2. One of the most exciting new introductions this year was 'Sunfinity' sunflower by Syngenta

Flowers. It is a great way to get consumers to grow their own cut flowers and bring them indoors to enjoy. 'Sunfinity' is supported by a consumer website and branded tags and pots.

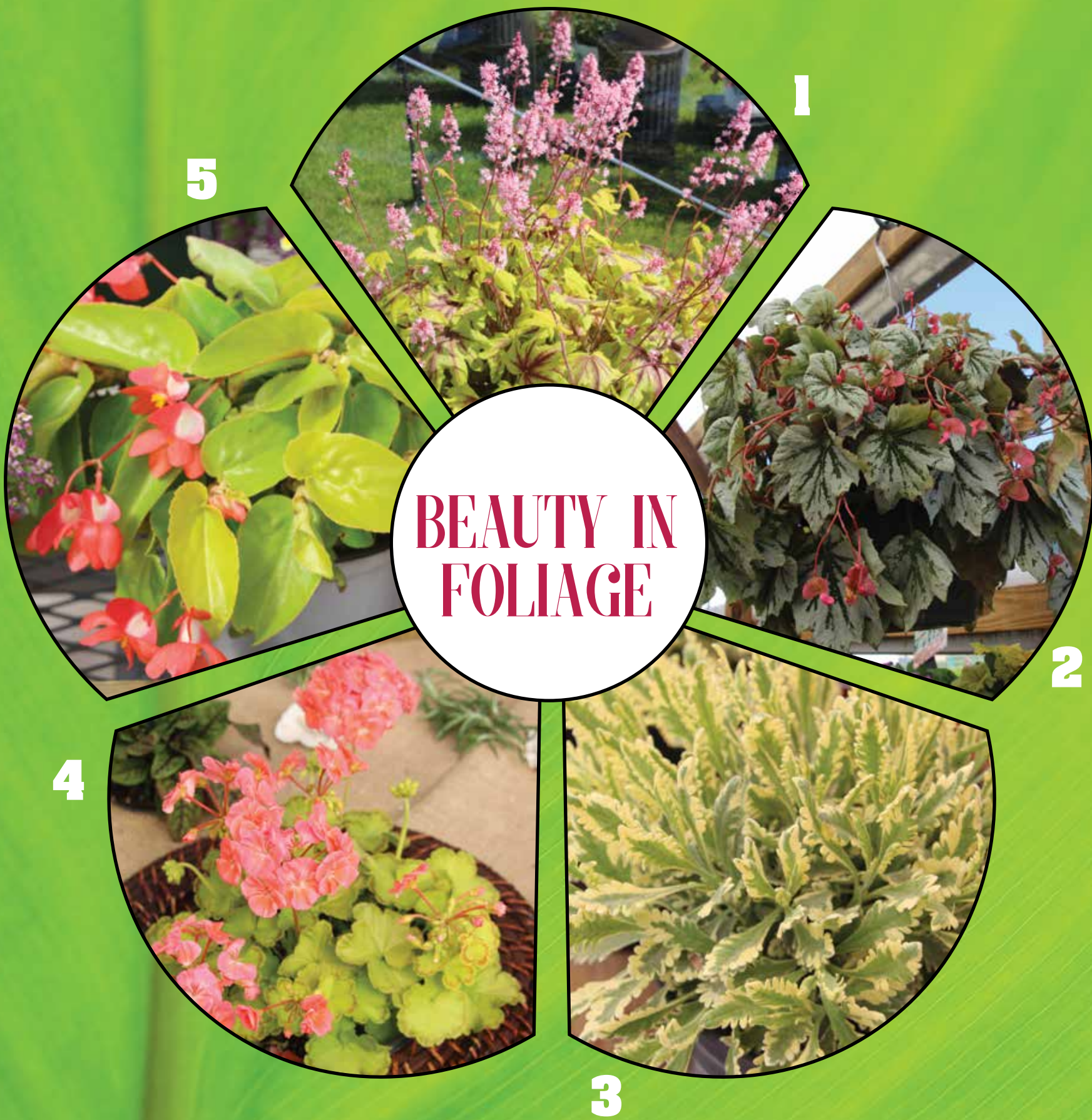
3. Pure Blooms is a campaign introduced by Florist Holland that is meant to educate consumers about gerberas and their ability to purify air. This campaign may encourage consumers to bring gerberas back into the home from the outdoors.

4. Plant Haven distributed booklets at its stop titled "Cocktail Culture," which brought

together cocktail recipes that included ways to incorporate plants. A tasty and refreshing presentation!

5. Pollinator health remains a huge concern to many gardeners, and Suntory continues to support the Pollinator Partnership with its sales of Beedance bidens. This year, a new color was introduced to the series, 'Beedance Yellow'.

6. Social media use continues to increase, especially within our industry. Benary created a great Instagram display, incorporating its #successpetunia hashtag.



BEAUTY IN FOLIAGE

While flowers definitely catch our eye, it's not always about the blooms. Sometimes a plant's foliage is just as attractive as, if not more than, the flowers above it.

1. Heucherella 'Fun and Games Eye Spy' from Walters Gardens presents amber yellow foliage with a prominent center pattern, which mellows to bright green in summer. The bubblegum pink flowers offer a nice contrast to the striking foliage.

2. An unusual begonia with maple-like silver leaves, 'Spectre Silver' from Terra Nova Nurseries is complemented with bright red-pink sterile flowers that hang about the plant casually, creating an impressive basket presentation.

3. Bred by Kiwiflora, lavender 'Meerlo' boasts beautifully variegated and highly fragrant foliage year round. This variety is extremely heat, humidity and drought tolerant.

4. 'Glitterati Diva Queen' from Hort Couture is a new hybrid specialty geranium that has vibrant chartreuse leaves with a striking rust red zone and bright pink flowers.

5. Ball Ingenuity's begonia 'Canary Wings' offers an extremely unique look with its yellow to bright chartreuse foliage. It is great for small pots, large containers and combinations.



MIXING WITHOUT LIMITS

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When it comes to mixed combinations, it seems that rules no longer apply. Breeders are coming out with new concepts and mixing plants together that we have never seen before.

1. Dümmer Orange continues to expand its perennial combinations, which was a new program introduced last year. There are currently 21 varieties in the program. They are all first-year flowering and can be mixed and matched for custom combos.

2. Calendula isn't really a plant we regularly see in mixes. Kientzler's 'Power Daisy' was a big introduction last year, and this year they are adding it to the TrioMio combinations.

3. Geraniums are a huge category for Syngenta Flowers. They had a ton of new introductions in various series this year and showcased how well they all play together in mixes.

4. This year, Proven Winners announced three National Recipes for 2018. From left

to right, 'Lilac Festival' is the spring recipe, 'Summerfest' is the summer recipe and 'Enchanted Garden' is the fall recipe.

5. Danziger continues to add to its Mixis line and gave Spring Trials attendees a chance to vote for their favorite. A lucky winner will even get to name their pick!

6. Attendees also got to vote for their favorite combinations at Westhoff, and judging by the amount of flags in this mix I think they have a winner.

CUT FLOWER REVIVAL



Cut flowers seemed to appear at almost every stop, whether in their cut form in vases or as a “grow your own cut flower” display. Both categories are growing as consumers are looking to beautify their indoor spaces.

1. Cut flowers are certainly not a new category for Sakata, but this year their cut flower display was incredible. They showed

how so many of their varieties, such as campanula, lisianthus, aster, sunflowers and more, could be used together as stunning centerpieces.

2. Another impressive cut flower display was at PanAmerican Seed, where they showed how varieties like stock and phlox create a lovely presentation with strong stems and lasting flowers.

3. ‘Rockin’ Red’ dianthus, bred by Kieft Seed, is a perfect plant for borders. And with its vivid, scented blooms and durable performance, consumers will love bringing this plant indoors.

4. Summer Paradise alstroemeria from HilverdaKooij is a great landscape plant that will produce masses of flowers from May through December. They will easily tolerate having their stems picked to make a pretty bunch for a vase.



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VERTICAL APPEAL



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1. Ligustrum 'Straight Talk' by Bailey Nurseries is perfect as a vertical accent in tight spaces. It is only 2 feet wide and tightly upright.

2. J. Berry Nursery, a first time Spring Trials exhibitor, showcased its Black Diamond crapemyrtles. Here is 'Best Red', which creates a colorful hedge with its stunning, near-black foliage.

3. A native cultivar, panicum 'Prairie Winds Totem Pole' (Walters Gardens) boasts

long-lasting color and can be used as a vertical accent in small spaces, hedges and windscreens.

4. Ball FloraPlant's SolarTower series is the first self-climbing ipomoea series. It is ideal for use with a trellis, as a topiary or on a vertical wall planting. [gpn](#)

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