

HOT PERFORMERS

from the Southern Plant Trials

These new annuals present unique colors, flower stability and exceptional summer performance.

I look forward to attending the Southern Plant Trials in early June. This follows the California Spring Trials, which for many years has become a display of pristine introductions. The Southern Trials are some of the first opportunities to evaluate the new introductions in beds, baskets, and containers under high temperatures, humidity and rain in three different trials sites.

The Southern Trials this year included stops at Young's Plant Farm in Alabama, University of Georgia in Athens, and Metrolina in North Carolina.

As a horticulturist, I am looking for specific attributes in the new annual varieties: uniformity, durability, flower stability, foliage integrity, uniqueness, heat tolerance, flower vibrancy and floriferousness. The varieties I have chosen demonstrated these attributes in multiple trials. They will have high impact at retail with exceptional sell-through potential and successful performance for the consumer. Many plants were worthy of consideration, but these varieties were remarkable and distinctive.



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1. BEGONIA 'CANARY WINGS'

Ball Ingenuity

This Dragon Wing type variety was a pre-introduction this year and available in selective markets, but the official launch is for 2019. This is an exciting new vegetative begonia for partial shade with yellow-chartreuse vibrant foliage and sterile red flowers transitioning to deep pink or light red in full shade. This is a unique and bold variety with excellent application in baskets and mixed containers. We need more shade-adaptable flowering annuals, and this is a welcome addition to the portfolio. 'Canary Wings' is exclusive to Ball Seed Company for 2019.

2. CALIBRACHOA 'BLOOMTASTIC PINK FLARE'

Dümmen Orange

The National Garden Bureau announced that 2018 was going to be the Year of the Calibrachoa, and that was appropriate considering the diversity of this genus and multiple applications in production. What sets a calibrachoa variety or series apart from the competition? We saw a glimpse of a game changer this season with the introduction of the Bloomtastic series for 2018, which included Rose Quartz and Serenity. This is the most vigorous calibrachoa series offered by Dümmen Orange. The

large, iridescent flowers were eye popping, specifically in basket production this spring. This is a day length neutral series with a spreading growth habit. The new introduction for next year is Pink Flare. This variety had the most iridescent, vibrant and distinctive flowers in the landscape beds at Metrolina and based on performance this spring and the three unique colors, this series must be considered for all calibrachoa programs.

3. CALIBRACHOA 'CHAMELEON ATOMIC ORANGE'

Westhoff

The Chameleon series of polychromatic flowers on the same plant changing with the season is a wonderful addition to the genus and adds incredible opportunities in mixed combos and monocultural baskets. We have seen the application of these outrageous multi colored varieties in production the past two seasons, and for 2019 the standout in the southern trial was Atomic Orange, a blended tricolor of orange, melon and yellow. This is a vigorous variety consistent with the series and was the most scintillating in the Alabama trial. The series now consists of 14 varieties.

4. CALIBRACHOA 'SUPERBELLS DOUBLETTE LOVE SWEPT'

Proven Winners

Proven Winners continues to add to the uniqueness of this calibrachoa class with Doublette Love Swept. This double flowering variety was in multiple trials, and the flowers were stable, nonfading and colorful. Proven Winners describes the flower color as a double bright pink with a picotee white edge, and that definitely describes what I saw in the trials. It is a more compact variety, early to flower, and will be an essential component of creative mixed containers.

5. CELOSIA 'FIRST FLAME PURPLE'

PanAmerican Seed

This new *Celosia plumosa* 'First Flame Purple' was introduced at Spring Trials, and the vivid purple plume was vibrant and dramatic. It was promoted as a nonfading variety in hot conditions, and it manifested this is the North Carolina trial. It branches like a plumosa with dense plumes and matures at 10 to 14 inches. It flowers one week earlier than Red, Yellow and Scarlet, but maintains uniformity across all colors. This variety will have application in mixed containers and borders.

6. COLEUS 'RUBY SLIPPER'

Ball FloraPlant

There were more than 50 varieties of vegetative coleus in the trials, and many were worthy of inclusion in this article; but one variety, 'Ruby Slipper', stood out for its stunning color and impact. It is a darker red than 'Redhead'. In the trial bed it demonstrated compactness, nonfading foliage, excellent branching and no flower initiation. This is a full sun or shade variety maturing at 16 to 24 inches, and will be outstanding in large mixed containers and landscape beds. Ball FloraPlant continues to introduce stunning colors to its coleus portfolio, and these breeding advances raise the bar for all coleus breeders. We are seeing the results with significant improvements in foliage stability, unique color patterns and summer performance.



7. NEW GUINEA IMPATIENS 'WILD ROMANCE RED'

Dümmen Orange

We continue to see more shade adaptable varieties in the breeding pipeline every year, which is good news for the industry and consumers. The Romance series was introduced last year with White and Blush Pink, and now Dümmen Orange has introduced Red for 2019. The new Red in the trial beds was earlier to bloom and more floriferous than the White and Blush Pink, but it maintained uniformity and vigor consistent with the series. The gardenia-like double flowers had excellent color saturation and the high bud count was eye catching. I can visualize a mixed basket of all three colors for retail appeal.



8. PETCHOA 'SUPERCAL PREMIUM CINNAMON'

Sakata

The Supercal poremiums are new for 2019 and the next generation of petchoa SuperCals. I highlighted Caramel Yellow in an earlier article on the Costa trial. These four new introductions — Bordeaux, Sunray Pink, Caramel Yellow and Cinnamon — are significant because of the autumn color palette they offer. They have larger flowers and a more mounded habit and will offer multiple applications in baskets, mixed containers and designer kits. Cinnamon specifically is novel and distinct from any interspecific petunia in the industry. The Premium series has large flowers, and dark centers with pronounced venation. I have traveled the summer trial circuit for many years, and very few petunia varieties match the summer performance of the SuperCals through September.



9. PETUNIA 'CRAZYTUNIA COSMIC PURPLE'

Westhoff

Westhoff has made significant breeding advancements and introductions in the last few years. The company started as a finish grower producer in Europe and has progressed to become one of the foremost flower breeding companies in the world. They have marketed a broad range of products recently — including calibrachoa Chameleon, portulaca Colorblast, cuphea Floriglory, and last year the begonia RiseUp and Shine Bright series — but I believe the petunia Crazytunias have had the greatest impact on



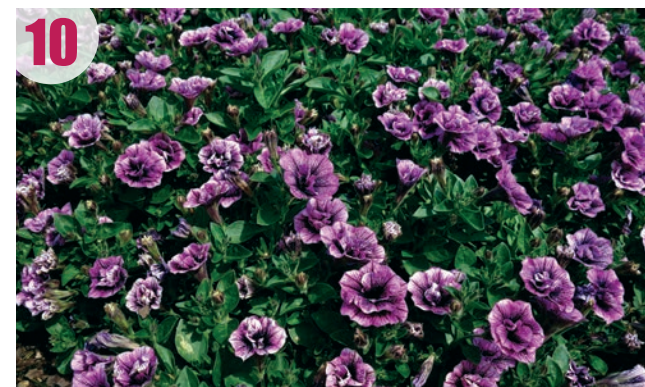
the industry since their introduction. This is a collection of varieties with wide ranging audacious and eye popping, exciting polychromatic patterns.

There are now 36 varieties to choose from, and this gives the grower many choices for colorful mixed containers and baskets. The most impressive introduction for 2019 is Cosmic Purple, with dark raspberry-magenta flowers. The flowers are flashy, the habit is vigorous, and it displays excellent heat tolerance, flower stability and floriferousness.

10. PETUNIA 'VERANDA DOUBLE SUGAR PLUM'

Kientzler

I know you are thinking, do we really need another petunia variety? Well, the answer is yes! This variety is a good reason why continued breeding with improvements in flower stability, uniqueness, flower form, insect and disease resistance, ease of production and color



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is imperative to our industry. Ultimately, it is the consumer who benefits from the results of these breeding goals. The Veranda series is comprised of six compact and 12 vigorous varieties. The compact series contains one of the most distinctive double flowers in the industry. Double Sugar Plum is an early-blooming, compact variety with tight internodes and a fully double ruffled flower, deep purple with purple venation and a light purple margin. My description fails to adequately describe this flower; I will let the accompanying photo prove my point. I did not see any deadheading issues as the next flush is rapid. The double flowers were stable, consistently double, and most importantly the flower extended out of the foliage canopy for a dramatic presentation. This variety will be an outstanding petunia for mixed containers and will compliment many colors and components.

11. SALVIA 'ROCKIN' FUCHSIA'

Proven Winners

Proven Winners has introduced some significant salvia varieties including 'Rockin' Deep Purple' and 'Rockin' Playin' the Blues'. For 2019 we will see a color breakthrough with 'Rockin' Fuchsia', the first gauranitica type with large fuchsia flowers and a black calyx. This variety is distinctive with excellent branching, and with the inflorescence rising above the foliage as the plant matures. The dark leaf foliage with rugose leaves and conspicuous venation contrasted beautifully with the flower canopy. This is a pollinator magnet, maturing at 18 to 24 inches with application as a thriller in large containers. On a personal level, I am growing this in my containers and the basal branching, earliness and uniformity are impressive. This is recommended for full sun or partial shade.

12. VINCA 'TATTOO RASPBERRY'

PanAmerican Seed

I featured 'Tattoo Papaya' in the June issue for its vibrant colored petals and unique swirl pattern with dark eye. Raspberry was the most striking in this trial with its overlapping flowers and upright,

well-branched habit. It is a color that pops, and the entire color palette is the most dynamic vinca series in the industry. The colors are more intense under warm and high light conditions. The four colors are well branched with a three- to five-day flowering

window and production application includes large packs, quarts and mixed containers.

In summary, the breeding, development and introduction of ever brighter, distinctive and color saturated flowers continues with this year's introductions. As

new and improved varieties enter the market, plant attrition is also occurring, which is a positive development for the industry. Plant breeding will continue at an unrelenting pace to meet the demands of the industry and consumers taste and trends. *gpn*



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