

As 'Scene' at CALIFORNIA SPRING TRIALS

BY TIM HODSON

The 2019 edition of California Spring Trials took place a few weeks earlier than in years past, but that didn't slow down the breeders and exhibiting companies from putting on an amazing show.

This year, for the first time in several years, California Spring Trials took place in March.

The team from GPN and Lawn & Garden Retailer made our way down the California coast over five days visiting all of the stops to see what the breeding companies and other exhibitors have in store for the coming year.

Even for the experienced veteran, attending CAST can be a sensory overload — there is so much to see, smell, touch and even taste — that it can sometimes be a bit overwhelming.

There is something for everyone up and down the state but it may not always be obvious to see some of the things so this month we want to show you a sampling

of a few of the categories we thought seemed to be trending this year.

We logged a lot of miles, saw a lot of plants, talked to a lot of people and took a ton of photos to give you an idea of what is on the horizon.

In the July issue, we have many more new variety introductions lined up for you — so stay tuned ...

Perennial Popularity

1 California Spring Trials served as a coming out party for a lot of perennials with the introduction of ThinkPlants — a new marketing initiative created to bring exceptional perennials to the North American marketplace. The consortium is made up of Syngenta Flowers, Terra Nova Nurseries, Danziger, Kiwiflora, Unex and Kapiteyn.

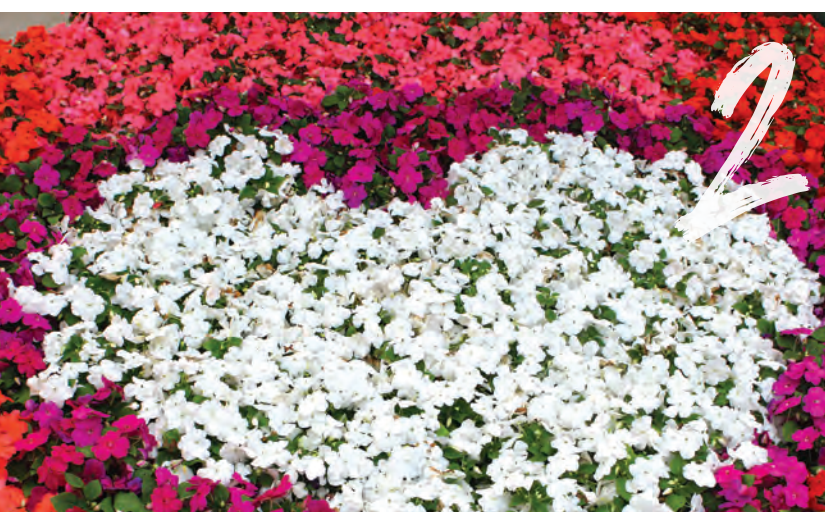
2 In addition to joining the ThinkPlants consortium, Terra Nova Nurseries also put together an attractive display of its latest perennial introductions at the Pacific Plug & Liner location.

3 Dümme Orange introduced Rock Crystal, a new series of delosperma with seven colors. Rock Crystal produces large, vivid flowers that are suitable for 1 quart to gallon production. It flowers under short and long days and produces retail color throughout the season.

4 One perennial that was really attracting attention was digitalis 'Pink Panther' from American Takii. This first-year flowering plant is compact for easy shipping. Its foliage is well balanced, and the flowers are sterile. 'Pink Panther's' sturdy branches help produce multiple colorful flower spikes.

5 Darwin Perennials believes it has "cracked the code" for hardiness with the new digitalis 'Arctic Fox Rose'. It is a beautiful, long-flowering hybrid that is hardy in northern gardens but also flowers all summer long in southern gardens.



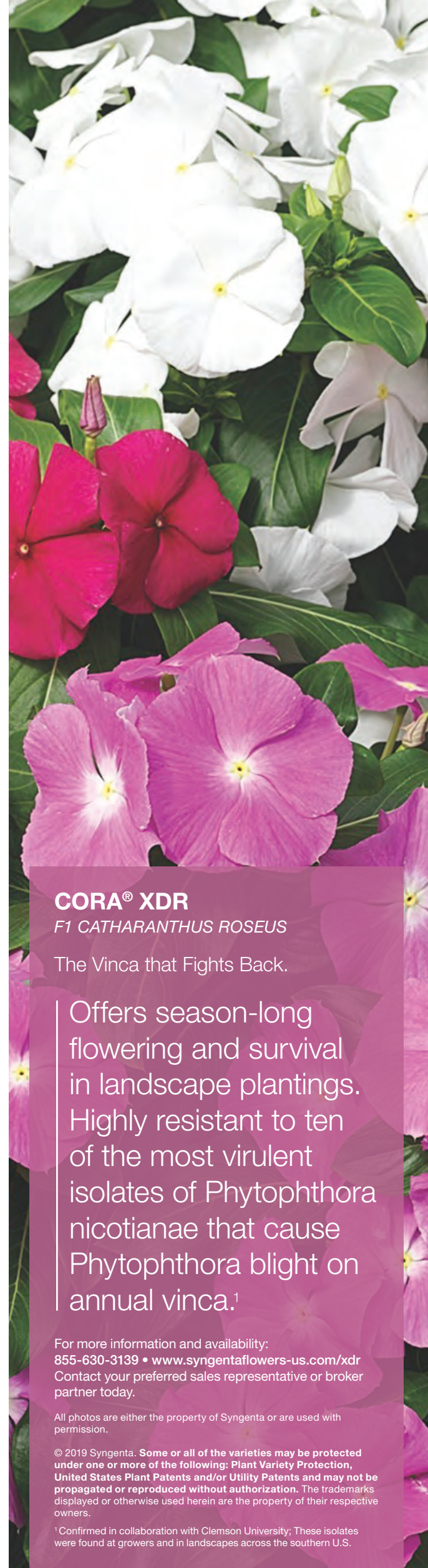


Impatiens Make a Comeback

Growers and gardeners have been searching for a solution to impatiens downy mildew for years. This year, Syngenta Flowers and PanAmerican Seed are introducing new Impatiens walleriana series that provide that solution. Both breeding companies have been doing extensive trials and were showing visitors the results of their research as well as their new products.

1 Imara XDR (Extra Disease Resistance) is Syngenta Flowers' new series of seed impatiens, that has been trialed extensively in North America and Europe. It is a landscape performer that is economical to produce and ideal for growing in packs and pots. There are currently eight colors in the series with two new colors due soon.

2 The new Beacon series of impatiens from PanAmerican Seed exhibits high resistance to impatiens downy mildew from sowing all the way through the gardening season. It will grow 10 to 12 inches tall and 12 to 14 inches wide. The series is made up of six colors and two mixes.



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¹ Confirmed in collaboration with Clemson University; These isolates were found at growers and in landscapes across the southern U.S.

Begonias Continue to Blossom

The begonia category continues to grow every year, and breeders are hard at work perfecting their genetics to develop new introductions to meet the needs of today's consumers. Here are just a few that premiered this year.

1 'Esme Peach' is the latest color addition to Beekenkamp's Dreams BK collection. It is very floriferous and has a long flowering period. It has excellent outdoor performance and high heat tolerance. It also has long shelf life at retail.

2 The Begonia Funky series from Benary looks great in baskets, containers and beds. It is easy to grow and ship, and consumers can grow it in partial to full sun. Its unique look and colors give it great consumer appeal. Four new colors debuted this year (Scarlet is shown).



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3 Sakata introduced two new begonia series — Viking and Viking XL. These all-weather begonias work great for the landscape as well as in containers. They are available in green, bronze and deep chocolate leaf colors. Twelve different colors are available ('Viking Red on Chocolate' is pictured).

4 Ball Ingenuity's *Betulia Begonia x hiemalis* has the look of a tulip. It has a compact habit with extremely durable smaller foliage and good branching. It blooms continuously from spring until first frost. It is available in four colors — Red, Bright Pink, Candy Pink and Light Pink.



5 J Berry Nursery's Crown Jewel begonias have a rich and luxurious foliage that really light up a landscape. These rhizomatous hybrids are bred for heat and drought tolerance and show little inclination for pest and diseases. These early bloomers will grow to 6 to 18 inches tall. There are four varieties in the collection.

Big on Bidens

The bidens category has continued to grow in recent years as the breeding companies look for new ways to push the envelope with this category.

1 'Blazing Embers' bidens is part of Danziger's Timeless Collection. Recommended for use in quarts, it has a very compact, ball-shaped habit. It has an abundance of bicolored blooms that really catch your eye.



2 'Giant Sun Francisco' from Westhoff is early flowering and has densely branched plants with large eye-catching blooms. It is recommended for combination containers and hanging baskets.



3 Benary+ introduced four new colors of its Taka Tuka bidens (Red Yellow Center is shown here). Perfect for hanging baskets, it has a well-branched habit that really stands out. Other colors include Red Glow, Orange Yellow Center and White Yellow Center.



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¹ Confirmed in independent trials in North America and Europe including trials in 2017 and 2018 at Cornell University's Long Island Horticultural Research & Extension Center.

Fun with Food

Breeders are continuing to find new shapes and sizes for their edibles that provide food and fun for the consumer.

1 Strawberry 'Summer Breeze Rose' from ABZ Seeds is an ornamental strawberry with double flowers that keep their red color for a long time compared to single flowers. Consumers get the beauty and color of the flowers a fresh fruit all summer long.



2 Burpee's Mardi Gras Fun peppers are snack-sized peppers that are available in four eye-catching colors (Orange is pictured). The timing and habit is similar for all four, so they can be grown together in a single container for a tasty and attractive patio display. Plant size grows to 18 to 30 inches. Fruit size is approximately 3 1/2 by 1 1/2 inches.



3 Heartbreakers is Prudac's series of compact, heart-shaped, cocktail tomatoes. Cut fruit present a unique heart shape. Each variety in the Heartbreakers series has excellent vigor and shows an abundance of fruit.

Continued on page 28 ...



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This is the Year of ... but Coming Next Year

National Garden Bureau has declared 2019 to be the Year of the Dahlia, Snapdragon and Salvia nemorosa (and Pumpkin) so some of the breeding companies are taking advantage of the timing to introduce new varieties in this year's NGB Year of categories.

1 Kieft Seeds' 'Salvatore Blue' is a premium look salvia with large spikes and deep color. Produced from seed, 'Salvatore Blue' has strong, black stems on well-branched plants and is well-suited for gallon production.

2 HilverdaKooij's Rebel pot dahlias are bright, cheerful and very colorful. The plant produces large flowers with strong stems and will continue to flower all the way until the first frost.

3 Salvia nemorosa Swifty from Green Fuse Botanicals will provide consumers with superior garden performance in the toughest of summer conditions. It is available with two different plant habits — Swifty and Swifty Multiflora. Multiflora Rose is shown here, it is naturally compact and highly disease resistant.

4 Snapdragon 'Speedy Sonnet Purple' from Sakata smells and looks great and will grab shoppers' attention in the garden center. Speedy Sonnet is bred for early winter through early spring sales in areas with high light.

5 Selecta One is supersizing its premium Venti dahlias with nine new colors (Red + White is pictured). The uniform, vigorous series of double-flowered dahlias is perfect for growers looking to fill the 2.5 quart and larger category.



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SEED & PLANT STARTER

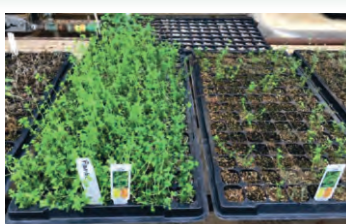
- Contains Mycorrhizal Fungi & 1 Billion Beneficial Microbes per gram
- Enhances Seed Germination
- Promotes Plant Establishment
- Increases Resistance to Stress & Disease
- Use when seeding, planting cuttings or plugs
- Enhances Root Development
- Enhances Nutrient Availability



Asclepias tuberosa cell on left did not receive any Seed & Plant Starter or Microbe Remedy. Asclepias tuberosa cell below was treated once with Seed & Plant Starter & four weeks later Microbe Remedy.

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- Increases Resistance to Stress & Disease
- Use two weeks after planting, then monthly
- Stimulates Root Growth
- Enhances Nutrient Availability



Pictured Left: Seed & Plant Starter was applied via an injector at time of sowing Begonia's. Grower saw increased germination & more uniformity.

Both lime thyme trays used equal amounts of media, fertilizer and cuttings. Seed & Plant Starter was applied to tray on the left after planting. Picture was taken after 3 weeks.

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Sun Shines on Helianthus

Even though it was only late March, it seemed like summer was right around the corner because sunflowers were shining during CAST.

1 Evanthia's Sunsation series of sunflowers has large, pollen-free blooms with a black center. The series has three new colors — Flame (pictured), Lemon and Yellow. This helianthus has multiple flower buds on the top and dark green glossy foliage. The compact habit requires little to no PGRs.

2 Proven Winners 'Suncredible Yellow' is a large, bushy and vegetative sunflower loaded with flowers. It continuously blooms from summer through the fall. It's a sun lover with sturdy stems and a uniform and well-branched habit and will grow 24 to 42 inches tall and 20 to 32 inches wide.



3 Last year Thompson & Morgan introduced the genetics for helianthus 'Sunbelievable Brown Eyed Girl', and this year Monrovia is ready to bring it to market. Consumers will love the fact that one plant reportedly will produce 1,000 blooms during the growing season. [gpn](#)



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