



COSTA FARMS 2019: Enduring Annual Performers

These new introductions withstood 23 weeks of heat, humidity and rain in Florida — and are sure to display the same success throughout the rest of the country.



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This is my third article based on this outstanding private trial. I covered 2020 annual and perennial introductions in June and July. I returned to Costa Farms in Miami in late May to evaluate current and new varieties in ground beds that withstood 23 weeks of heat, humidity and rain, and continued to reflect attributes that are essential for success throughout the country. These attributes include durability, flower stability, floriferousness, habit and disease resistance.

This is the only private trial where growth, development, maturity and senescence are manifested by the end of May. The selections I have highlighted are in regional trials this summer, and based on performance at the Costa trial I am expecting similar performance results.

1. ANGELONIA 'SERENA ROSE'

PanAmerican Seed

There were many varieties of angelonia in the trial, and this new Serena introduction was the only one that had not cycled out of flower by late May. The prodigious deep-rose florets with dark centers were stable and flowering evenly along the stems. The plants were durable and upright, and with the two-tone flowers were definitely eye catchers. This new color for Serena is an outstanding addition to Blue, Purple and White. This award-winning series flowers throughout the summer in a wide range of conditions and has won many performance trial awards throughout the country since its introduction. It has excellent application in quarts, mixed containers and landscape beds.

2. CALIBRACHOA 'UNO DOUBLE PLUMTASTIC'

Selecta

Selecta introduced the award-winning Double Pinktastic last year and has followed up with four double introductions for 2020 including Plumtastic, which was the top calibrachoa performer in the trial. The canopy of proliferous blue bicolor flowers was eye popping. The habit is compact and semi-trailing with outstanding flower stability. The Uno Double series is now comprised of 12 colors for application in quarts, mixed baskets and containers. Plumtastic will also be a component in Trixi recipes for 2020.



3. CATHARANTHUS 'SOIRÉE KAWAII RED'

Suntory

This series is a true summer survivor, and as I visit trials at the end of August and early September throughout the country the Kawaii series continues to impress with tiny but vibrant flowers, complete flower coverage with a mounded habit, and deep glossy green foliage. This is a low-maintenance series that thrives at high temperatures with excellent uniformity. There are six varieties in the series including the new introductions White Peppermint, Red and Light Purple. All three were colorful in the trial, but I chose Red for the photo because of its intense bright color. This is a later flowering series for the northern market in quart production, but it is worth the wait. Application in mixed containers and landscape beds has been outstanding since its introduction.

4. COLEUS 'STAINED GLASSWORKS PRESIDIO'

Dümmen Orange

Presidio was introduced in 2018 and was bold and stunning from mid-January through late May in the trial. It exhibited excellent foliage stability and a strong upright habit. The chartreuse foliage with burgundy flecks was striking and nonfading. It was grown in trial beds under 30% shade. The low maintenance, texture, and multicolored foliage offer a vibrant choice for beds and containers in partial shade, and it will make a wonderful low-maintenance accent plant. Presidio matures at 20 inches. The polychromatic foliage collection continues to expand every year, and with the addition of Velvet is now comprised of at least 15 unique and diverse colors.

5. GERBERA 'GARVINEA SWEET FROSTING'

Florist Holland

As I travel to trials throughout the summer and evaluate new varieties and the top performers, the gerbera Garvinea series continues to make that list. This is labeled the garden

gerbera, and lives up to the hype in any setting. In ground beds in Texas, North Carolina, Florida and Alabama trials, and in containers in the northern trials, this series has demonstrated multiple attributes including uniformity, disease resistance, robust upright habit,

strong central canopy, heat and humidity tolerance, extended bloom time and a multitude of daisy-shaped flowers on strong peduncles. The two new varieties for 2020 are Classic Femmy and Sweet Frosting, making a total of 15 assorted colors. There were

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5

VAUGHN'S VIEW

five Sweet Garvinea in the trial, and Sweet Frosting was an eye catcher with large, pure white, multiple flowers and strong upright architecture. The marketing and sales of the series in 5-, 6- and 7-inch containers increases every year. Application includes beds and thrillers in large containers.

6. GERANIUM 'GALAXY DARK RED'

Ball FloraPlant

Geraniums by late May in Florida are declining rapidly; however the interspecific varieties have been the most resilient, durable and floriferous. This was quite evident with 'Galaxy Dark Red', part of a new vigorous series of large semi-double varieties. Dark Red is characterized by large florets, dense flower spikes, vigor, mounded habit and, most importantly, a high flower count. All the varieties in the trial were uniform and upright with excellent flower coverage above the foliage. This



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series replaces the vigorous Allure class, and based on performance by all colors in the trial, offers improved vigor, uniformity and garden performance. There are eight colors in the series, and application consists of gallons, large baskets and containers.

7. GERANIUM 'MOJO DARK RED'

Syngenta Flowers

This new standalone introduction for 2020 may offer the darkest green foliage in interspecific geraniums. The chroma of the velvet-red florets contrasting with the dark foliage was distinctive and intense. With these qualities it will have outstanding retail appeal. It was extremely floriferous with minimal spent umbels and exhibited excellent heat and humidity tolerance. It is a medium-vigor variety, smaller than the Americana series, and will work in a range of sizes including quarts, 2.5 quarts and mixed containers. The long-term goal of the Syngenta geranium breeding program is to build a series around this outstanding variety.

8. LANTANA 'BANDOLERO GUAVA'

Syngenta Flowers

I highlighted the performance of this entire series in June. It has six bold varieties with a unique multicolored inflorescence. The umbels and florets become more intense and well defined as the plants mature, and that was evident in late May. The habit is vigorous but mounded with outstanding flower coverage. This series is recommended for 2.5 quarts and larger containers and baskets. I chose Guava as my favorite not only because of performance but because of its extraordinary tropical look. The umbels of yellow, orange and warm red florets were stunning and set this variety apart.

9. LANTANA 'GEM COMPACT ORANGE FIRE'

Danziger

Danziger introduced two new lines for 2020, the Gem series and a compact Gem subseries. The more vigorous Gem series is comprised of Gem Gold and Gem Ruby. The compacts are Orange Fire and Yellow Diamond. The compacts were in the trial and did not disappoint with dark

foliage, mounded habit, excellent flower stability and floriferousness. Orange Fire had deep red florets with a splash of yellow and dark green foliage that was striking from a distance. The compact Gem series is recommended for quarts and mixed containers and the

standard Gem series for gallons, combinations and baskets.

10. NEMESIA 'NESIA DENIM BLUE'

Danziger

It is rare to include a nemesia in my list of enduring performers at

the Costa trial, but I could not omit this one. This series is comprised of seven colors, including bicolors and multicolors. Danziger adds significant new colors every year. Denim Blue is new for 2020, and it did not disappoint in the late season. It manifested a strong,



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10



11

VAUGHN'S VIEW

upright habit with large gradations of purple flowers. This series is early to bloom, floriferous, with a striking color range, and is one of the most heat-tolerant nemesias in the industry. The series matures at 12 to 15 inches and has applications in quarts, gallons and mixed containers. We have an extensive portfolio of nemesia series to choose from, and multiple breeders introduced more varieties at the California Spring Trials for you to consider for 2020.

11. PETUNIA 'SHORTCAKE BLUEBERRY'

Syngenta Flowers

We have a plethora of novelty petunias in the market with more introduced every year. What sets one apart from a crowded field of unique and colorful varieties? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so ultimately the market will decide what sells. The breeder is cognizant of these challenges and focuses on attributes that will contribute to the success of a new introduction. These attributes include heat tolerance, durable habit, floriferousness, flower stability, flower pattern and uniqueness. 'Shortcake Blueberry', a standalone variety originating from the Dekko breeding program and introduced for 2020, demonstrated these attributes in the late-season trial. The white and blueberry bicolor midsize flowers were distinct, the color separation was sharp, and there was no evidence of color degradation following over 20 weeks of growth, development and maturity. It may be a standalone variety, but it stood tall in this trial. It will mature at 8 to 10 inches in height and has a distinct spreading habit of 18 to 20 inches. This variety will have application in small containers, beds and mixed containers.

12. PETUNIA 'SURFINIA PURPLE STARSHINE'

Suntory

This is the 30th anniversary of the introduction of the Surfinia petunia series, and it continues to have a strong presence in the market because of its outstanding garden performance. Suntory has been methodical in introducing new varieties to the series that meet the performance criteria of the classic varieties. The new novelty

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12



13

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Purple Starshine for 2020 demonstrated the heat tolerance, flower stability, self cleaning and vigor that we expect from this breeding line. The vivid, bright purple midsize flowers with the white star pattern were prolific, and the habit was mounding and semi-spreading. The flowers were slightly smaller than those of the classic Surfinia, but the profusion of color was impressive.

13. VERBENA 'SAMIRA BURGUNDY WING'

Benary+

I know what you are thinking when I highlight another verbena! Do we need another selection to augment the plethora of series and varieties currently in the marketplace? My answer is, there is always room for improvement, specifically in the areas of minimal cycling, heat and drought tolerance, and disease resistance. The Samira series — 14 varieties of stars, solids, wings and bicolors — has slowly gained market share the last few seasons because of its versatility, strong branching, mounded trailing habit, mildew tolerance, and color range. Burgundy Wing was new for 2019, and it was the most colorful verbena in the late May trial. The light violet flowers with burgundy wine wings were well defined with strong color retention, and the branching was mounding and semi-trailing. I was impressed with the clean foliage and no early signs of mildew. The new bicolor for 2020 is Cherry Wing. The series has multiple applications in quarts, mixed containers and baskets. [gpn](#)

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