

While the trek down the California coast was not physically possible this year, the exhibitors still had tons of material to share with growers for the upcoming season. Here are some highlights from their virtual displays!

BY JASMINA DOLCE

The 2020 California Spring Trials will definitely go down in history as one of the most memorable. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, heavy travel restrictions were put into place just weeks before the event was set to begin. And social distancing has since become the new normal.

But the plants were grown, the presentations were prepared and the show had to go on! Many exhibitors created their own virtual alternative, and others scheduled one-on-one meetings with would-be attendees. I was able to get in touch with each one and collect as much information on their 2021 introductions as possible to share with you.

Keep in mind, this is just a handful of what would have been on display. I'll share even more next month, so stay tuned!



PanAmerican Seed's new celosia Sol series showcases sun-loving foliage that is the perfect accent plant for containers or the landscape. 'Sol Gekko Green' earned a Fleuroselect Gold Medal for its unique texture, beautiful color contrast and outstanding garden performance.

RECOGNIZED AND HONORED

Oftentimes, new varieties catch the eye of industry members and prominent organizations before their Spring Trials debut. They are, after all, typically trialed across the country before going commercial. This year, many new introductions were already gaining attention and recognized for their beauty, strength, and versatility.



Part of **Hem Genetics'** Ornamental Edibles and Herbs collection, the new basil 'Purple Ball' recently received a Fleuroselect Gold Medal. It presents a compact, tidy deep purple-maroon colored plant with excellent aroma and flavor. The foliage is especially eye-catching with green accents in window boxes, mixed containers and borders.



Bred from the 'Prairie Sun' line, **Benary's** Rudbeckia hirta 'Amarillo Gold' is well branched but on a more compact plant, making it better for rack shipment. It boasts giant gorgeous yellow flowers with light green centers that make a bold statement in the garden. 'Amarillo Gold' is a 2020 All-America Selections award winner; judges noted how this rudbeckia was earlier to flower than comparisons and lasted throughout the summer.

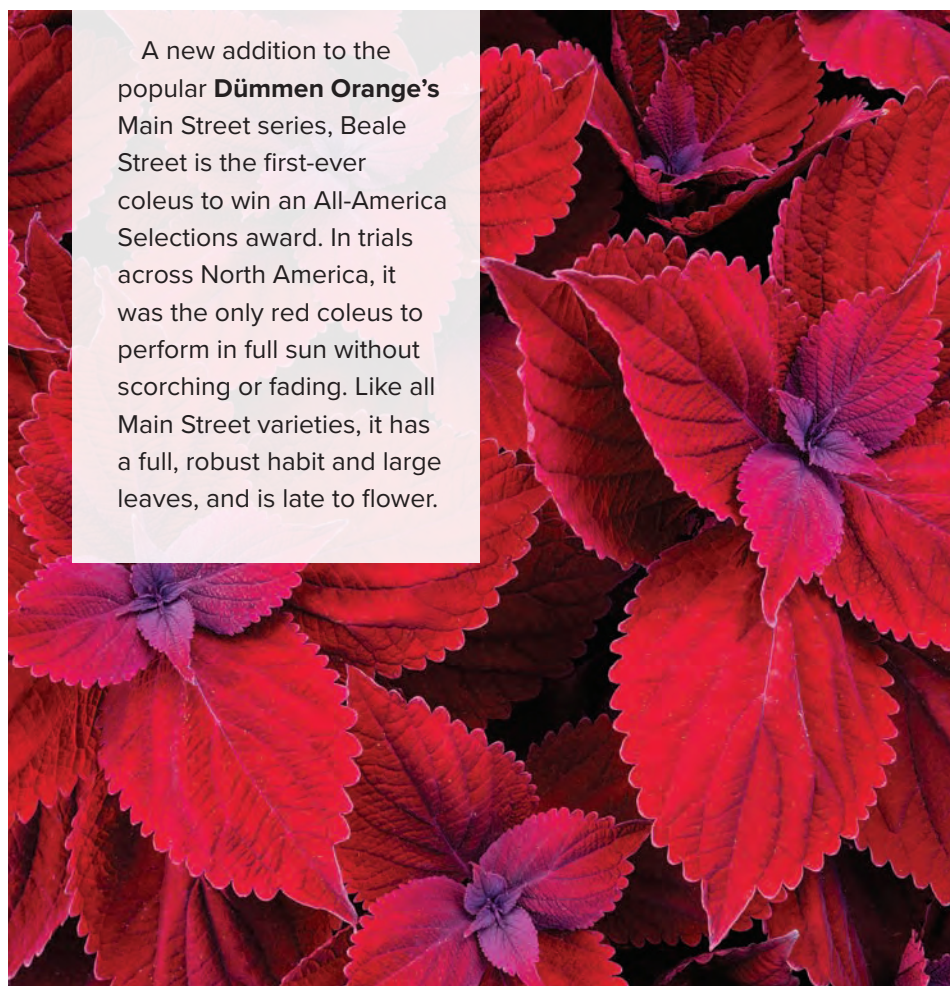


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A new addition to the popular **Dümmen Orange's** Main Street series, Beale Street is the first-ever coleus to win an All-America Selections award. In trials across North America, it was the only red coleus to perform in full sun without scorching or fading. Like all Main Street varieties, it has a full, robust habit and large leaves, and is late to flower.



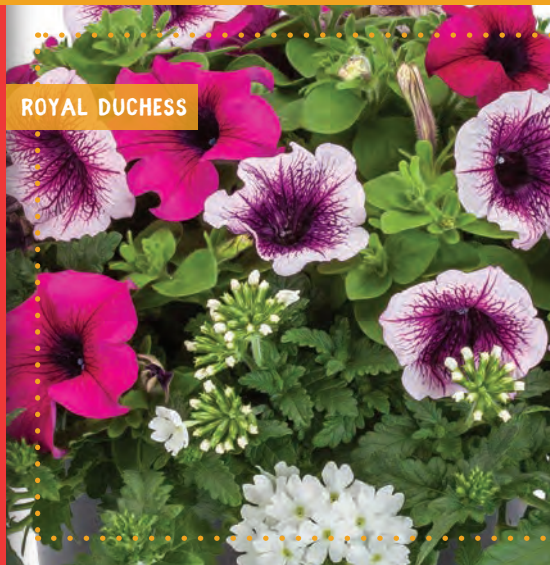
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MAD FOR MIXES

Mixed combinations are not new, but they continue to be extremely popular at the retail level. Consumers love these ready-made recipes and certainly appreciate the variety available. The breeders continue to trial experimental recipes and introduce the most successful top-performing mixes.



Syngenta Flowers does a ton of trialing work not only in the greenhouse but also in the garden to make sure they are selecting plants that flower together and work well together. This year, they introduced 15 new Kwik Kombos, which they designate by flower timing (early, mid and late season).

DuraBella is a new low-input program from **Danziger**. Just plant one liner of each item directly into the middle. The result has been less water use and less root issues. Danziger tested over 100 combinations and introduced around 25 this year.

MAD FOR MIXES CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ▶

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2020 CALIFORNIA *Spring Trials*

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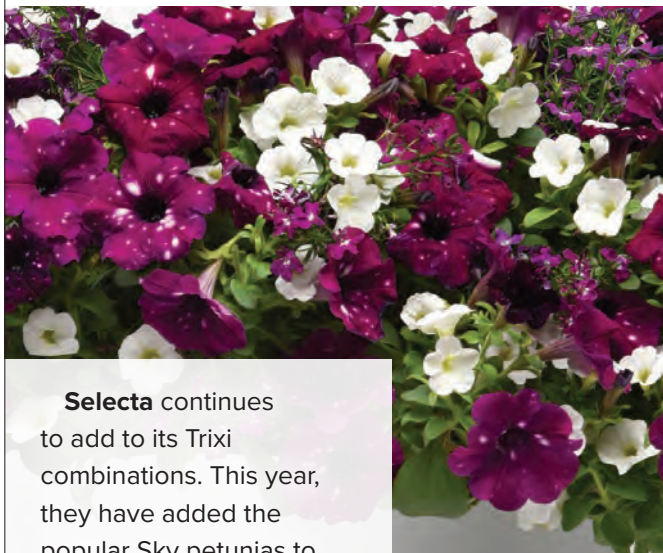


MISTY MOUNTAIN

Westhoff's Passion combos have been reinvigorated for 2020-2021, with 18 classic and 20 new recipes. They are selected for balance, color and novelty; many use FanciFillers as a major component. They are available in branded pots for retail-ready programs.



EUPHORIC



CHEMICAL ATTRACTION

Selecta continues to add to its Trixi combinations. This year, they have added the popular Sky petunias to the mixes. Trixi Chemical Attraction features the new 'Headliner Electric Purple Sky' and Trixi Sky's the Limit includes 'Headliner Night Sky'.



SKY'S THE LIMIT

BRINGING THE OUTDOORS IN

Now more than ever, people are finding ways to beautify their home interiors, which of course includes indoor gardening. Even before the current pandemic, houseplants, cut flowers and other indoor potted crops have been continuously trending. That trend will only increase in popularity in the months, and years, to come.



Delphinium Jenny's Pearl, from **American Takii**, is a versatile plant that can be used in pots and beds, and can also be grown as a cut flower with excellent vase life. It is available in a vibrant blue and not commonly found delicate pink. These eye-catching colors remain stable even under high temperatures.



Kalanchoes are already a well-known indoor potted plant, adored for their bright colors and succulent foliage. They are a popular gift item and are fairly easy to care for. **Beekenkamp** introduced a new line — Tiger — this year. Tiger kalanchoe is available in three bright colors, with more to come, all of which have bold, eye-catching dark centers.



Freesias are one of the world's most popular cut flowers, and **Flamingo Holland** continues to introduce new and innovative cultivars in the category. This year, they are adding three new varieties to their Nano series that are even quicker and more compact than previous varieties. These are usable for 4-inch production, which wasn't possible before.



Sakata has had a strong focus on the cut flower category for years, and that continues with a totally new series of campanula. Champion II features uniformity across colors and extra large flowers. The plants have upward-facing flowers, making for better transportation. Four colors are available, but Rose is definitely a standout.

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Petunias

Ok, petunias are ALWAYS popular. But this year saw many exciting new introductions that are absolutely worth mentioning.

'Bee's Knees' from **Ball FloraPlant** is a standalone variety that is truly rewriting what a yellow petunia should look like. The flowers present an intensely saturated yellow color above deep dark green foliage. It has excellent garden performance and will look outstanding in hanging baskets.

DuraBloom is **Dümmen Orange's** first interspecific series of petunias. They used a wild species with an aggressive root system that is resistant to heat and drought. It boasts thick petals that are resistant to rain. This blend of strength in and above the ground creates a durable landscape plant. It can be started early and is daylength neutral.

PETUNIAS AND BEGONIAS AND HYDRANGEAS, OH MY!

Each year, there are always certain crop categories that seem to get more attention than others. It is always interesting to see which crops will be trending while hopping from stop to stop. Will it be geranium? Or perhaps salvia? I recall bidens had a big year a few years ago with lots of new color introductions, from fiery orange to bright pink. And I'll never forget the year when almost every stop had bicolor verbenas.

This year, these three categories were a strong focus and recurring theme with many of the breeders.

Begonias

Another hugely popular category that continues to see new introductions each year, and 2020 is no different.

Benary is basically synonymous with begonias. From Bigs to Nonstops, and so many more in between, Benary continues to lead the pack in begonia breeding. This year, they are introducing a totally new series: Groovy. This boliviensis from seed has big flowers on shorter internodes. It thrives in full sun to part shade and is great to use in mixed containers.



The Fiona series was released in 2019 by **American Takii**, with Red even winning a Fleuroselect Gold Medal. This year, two new colors are joining the series: Pink and White. The semi-double flowers on Fiona begonias present strong, upright blooms, and plants are self-cleaning.



Another huge introduction for **Benary** this year is the new 'Big White Green Leaf'. It matches the garden performance of the popular series and can handle the sun and shade. This new color addition is essential for growers producing Big begonias.



Florencio is **Syngenta Flowers'** entrance into vegetative begonias. It is interspecific breeding that boasts outstanding outdoor performance and season-long value for the consumer. Five vibrant colors are available with upright grower-friendly habits.



Dümmen Orange (left) and **Danziger** (below) have each added sky-type petunias to their assortment. Dümmen Orange introduced the Surprise Sparkle series, and Danziger is adding Splash Dance. Both series feature speckled white patterns on vivid flowers that create a dazzling presentation.

FlashForward is a new spreading milliflora series from **Syngenta Flowers** and is an upgrade to Picobella Cascade. It offers miniature flowers on early-flowering and tidy plants that hold up well in shipping. They do not overgrow and are good playmates with other plants.

Suntory has had great success with its 'Surfinia Heartbeat' and is adding a new color, 'Surfinia Purple Heart'. Each white flower features a pattern of five purple hearts. It provides a charming presentation in baskets and containers, and is perfect for spring and summer holiday promotions.



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Hydrangeas

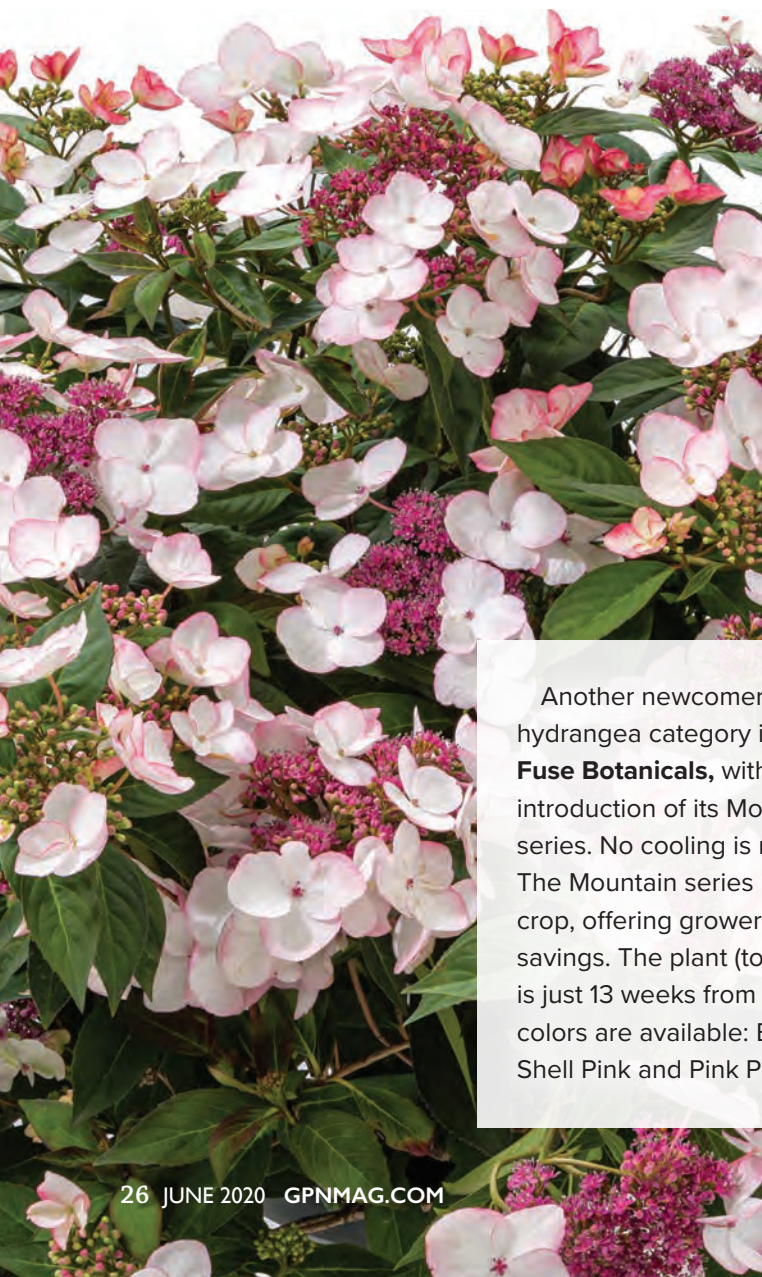
Consumers love hydrangeas. They are definitely a go-to product on the retail bench. From smaller potted types that are used as gifts to larger landscape selections, they continue to be a garden favorite.



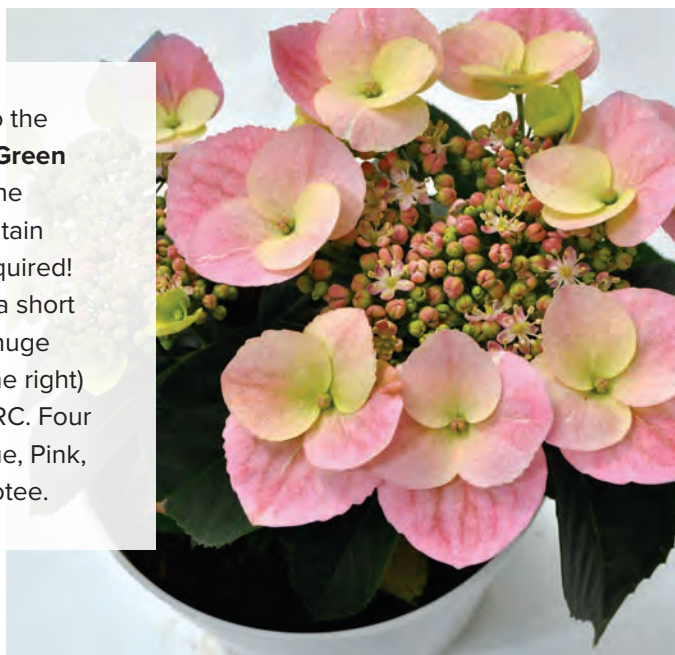
Newport is the newest addition to **Monrovia's** Seaside Serenade collection. This tetraploid offers a naturally compact and sturdy habit as well as thicker, waxier flowers and foliage. The flowers on this plant last for three months and go through many colors.



Syngenta Flowers is entering the hydrangea market, with its collaboration with the Netherlands-based HI Breeding. HI hydrangeas are bred with the grower in mind, with features like strong stems and flower longevity. Fire and Snow are compact selections ideal for smaller containers, and their reblooming adds value for the consumer.



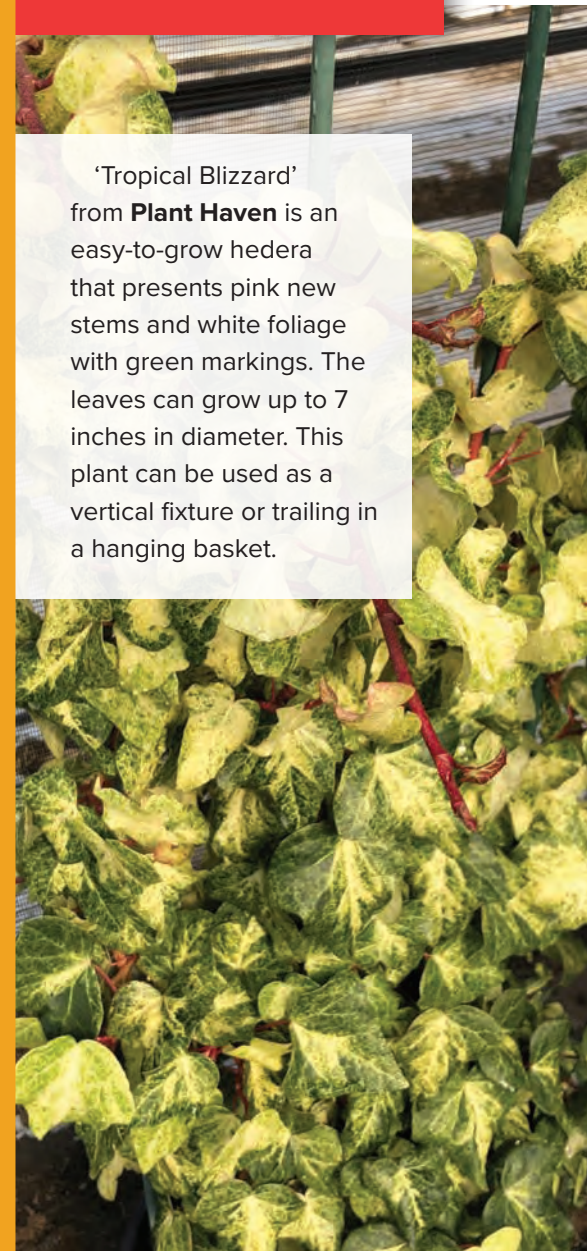
Another newcomer to the hydrangea category is **Green Fuse Botanicals**, with the introduction of its Mountain series. No cooling is required! The Mountain series is a short crop, offering growers huge savings. The plant (to the right) is just 13 weeks from URC. Four colors are available: Blue, Pink, Shell Pink and Pink Picotee.

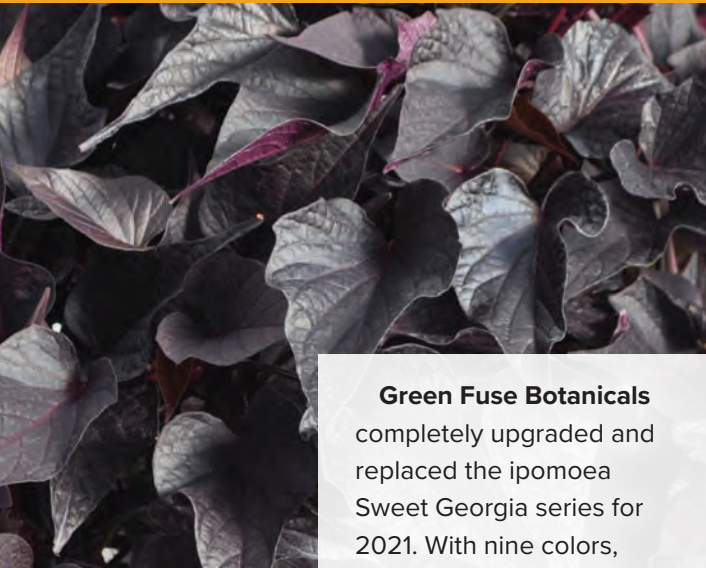


ALL ABOUT FOLIAGE

As indoor crops increase in popularity, so do foliage crops. Not only are they good houseplants, but they are wonderful mixers and accents to larger combination plantings. These fun foliage introductions are strong, versatile and eye-catching.

'Tropical Blizzard' from **Plant Haven** is an easy-to-grow hедера that presents pink new stems and white foliage with green markings. The leaves can grow up to 7 inches in diameter. This plant can be used as a vertical fixture or trailing in a hanging basket.





Green Fuse Botanicals

completely upgraded and replaced the ipomoea Sweet Georgia series for 2021. With nine colors, including the bicolored Green Splash and uniquely shaped Black Maple, the series is great for monoculture and combination pots.



Dryopteris 'Jurassic Gold' from **Concept Plants** is a unique fern that has a brilliant spring color. The young shoots are golden orange and fade to bright golden yellow and green as they age. This plant brightens up shady gardens in the ground or in containers.



Centaurea 'Mercury' from **Jaldety** presents a wonderful intense silver-white color on rosettes of decorative, wavy, rounded lobed leaves. This is a perfect foliage plant for combinations, edging, rock gardens and more. [gpn](#)

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