



This month, we take a “virtual” look at the top trial performers at Young’s Plant Farm, Metrolina Greenhouses and the University of Georgia.



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I have attended the Southern Plant Trials for well over 10 years, and I never could have imagined missing my June visit. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and travel restrictions, I decided to stay home this year. All of my previous articles were based on my observations and evaluations and included my photographs.

This year, I collaborated with Penny Merritt-Price, trial manager at Young’s Plant Farm in Alabama;

Lida Sladkova, product development director at Metrolina in North Carolina; and Brandon Christopher Coker from the University of Georgia. They were helpful and cooperative in selecting many of their favorite new introductions based on color and performance, and they provided high-quality photographs for my consideration. After reviewing many notable varieties, I selected what I consider to be the most remarkable. I appreciate their passion, knowledge, and contributions to our horticultural industry and the information they provided, which I am sharing with you in this article.

1. NEMESIA ‘NESIA BANANABERRY’

Danziger

There are many new nemesia introductions for 2021 including the new Tutti Frutti and BananaBerry, which are part of the Nesia series from

Danziger. In previous articles, I have highlighted two nemesia standouts, and they were both Nesia varieties, Sunshine and Denim Blue. The series has many attributes including uniformity, dark foliage, earliness, unique bicolors and multicolors, and a strong upright habit. Why have I focused on this nemesia series? The Nesias offer some of the most heat-tolerant varieties in the market. The series performs in the south as well as the northern regions until August with a floriferous canopy. There are now 10 colors in the series, and the multicolored BananaBerry was eye-catching with strong branching and abundant flowering in the Metrolina trial.

2. SALVIA ‘WHITE FLAME’

Ball FloraPlant

This genus has become ubiquitous in the market, and for good reason. It offers tremendous diversity in size, foliage texture, flower color and production application. Benefits to the consumer are heat tolerance, persistent flowering, and attractiveness to bees and hummingbirds. Salvia ‘White Flame’ is a new interspecific for 2021 and matches Mystic Spires in height. It offers an abundance of long white flower spikes that possess a gray calyx and a white corolla positioned above the foliage canopy. This variety matures at 24 to 30 inches with an upright habit and will provide a low maintenance plant with prolific white flowers for the garden,



especially in the evening light. It was one of the most colorful and unique salvias in the Metrolina trial.

3. RUDBECKIA HIRTA ‘AMARILLO GOLD’

Benary

This new All-America Selections and Fleuroselect Gold Medal winner for 2020



was in the Young's Plant Farm trial and was performing as advertised. It manifested earliness, uniformity, a strong upright habit, and large flowers with a light green center and golden ray petals radiating yellow at the tips. The flower size is comparable to 'Prairie Sun', but most importantly on a more compact and dense plant maturing at 12 to 18 inches. This variety is not hardy but will provide outstanding production application in gallons and 8-inch containers for summer and fall sales.

4. NEW GUINEA IMPATIENS 'MAGNUM MIDNIGHT ORCHID'

Dümmen Orange

The large flowering Magnum series has been in the market for well over 10 years, and the series continues to grow in popularity because of the flower size, uniformity, and new colors. For 2021, Dümmen Orange has added three vibrant and stellar varieties: XL Orange with extra-large flowers, Mandarin Splash with a star pattern, and Midnight Orchid, the first variety in the series with black foliage. The foliage contrasted strikingly with the bicolor pale pink flowers with a rose eye and rose colored streaks. This was one of the most popular varieties in the trial during Metrolina's annual consumer day.

5. CALIBRACHOA 'OMBRÉ PINK'

Danziger

Danziger continues to add to their extensive line of calibrachoa series including Eyeconic, Lia, Colibri and Noa. The new bicolor and multicolored Ombré series consists of Yellow, Pink and Blue. This is a controlled semi-trailing series for quarts, combinations and hanging baskets. Pink was particularly striking in the landscape beds at Metrolina with the large pink and yellow bicolor flowers, strong vigor and prolific flower canopy.

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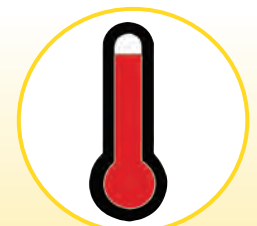
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6. PORTULACA MEGA PAZZAZ SERIES

Danziger

Danziger has added to their portulaca assortment with the Mega Pazzaz for 2021. This series was trialed at Young's Plant Farm and Metrolina. The four bright colors — Gold, Purple, Pink and Orange — demonstrated uniformity, similar timing, a mounded habit, and extremely large flowers that completely covered the canopy, no open centers. I look forward to seeing how this series performs in the northern trials, but in the southern trial it was impressive. The flower timing and plant size matches the standard Pazzaz series.

7. BEGONIA 'NONSTOP FIRE'

Benary

The quintessential Nonstop begonia series continues to expand with the addition of Sunset and the new and improved Fire for 2021. The original Fire was discontinued over 10 years ago due to seed production issues, and Benary has worked diligently to recreate this unique multicolored variety. Based on its flowering, habit and multicolored flowers in the basket trial at Metrolina, Benary has succeeded in producing and introducing a variety that invariably will be in all Nonstop begonia programs. The multicolored flowers of orange/red/yellow were large, audacious and stunning, and the habit was compact and mounded with excellent flower placement above the foliage. This variety will be a wonderful addition to the Nonstop begonia series in timing and habit, and the sell through will be outstanding.

8. CALIBRACHOA 'TIKTOK PINK'

Dümmen Orange

This new introduction had the most dynamic, brilliant and radiant color of all new calibrachoa introductions based on my observation this spring and early summer. What set this variety apart from the crowd? The bright and distinct yellow star-shaped center and the color saturation and vibrancy of the petals were eye popping. There are three colors in the series for 2021: Grape, Rose and White. Rose was the most outstanding color in the Metrolina landscape beds and manifested vigor, strength



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and floriferousness. I received Rose as part of my sampler program, and it is demonstrating the same attributes in my containers as in the southern trial beds. TikTok varieties will have application in quarts, mixed containers and baskets, and will create retail excitement and strong demand for the 2021 spring season. I expect to see this series, especially Rose, in many spring programs.

9. GERBERA 'GARVINEA MAJESTIC YELLOW'

HilverdaFlorist

The new double flowering Garvinea Majestic series consists of Yellow, Light Pink and Burgundy. I first saw this series in the Costa trial in Florida, both in January and March, and I was greatly impressed with the exceptional flower color and performance of Burgundy, which I highlighted in my June article. This extraordinary performance continued in the Metrolina trial, but in this trial Yellow was the standout variety. Its brightness, color saturation, vibrancy and strong architecture were outstanding. This series has multiple attributes including heat tolerance, extended flowering, uniformity and garden performance. Production application includes 5-, 6- and 8-inch containers. Consumers utilize Garvinea in landscape beds and in large containers as a thriller. HilverdaFlorist has many Garvinea choices including Classic, Sweet, and the new Cheeky and Majestic series.

10. PETUNIA 'TEA BLUE BICOLOR'

Beekenkamp

Beekenkamp has diversified its extensive portfolio with the introduction of the Tea petunia series in 2018. This series was bred by David Kerley, one of the world's foremost independent flower breeders. This series now comprises 14 assorted colors including stars, morns, rims and solids. I highlighted the outstanding performance of 'Tea Rose Morn' in the Raker trial in my March 2019 article. This series is floriferous, has grandiflora size flowers, is semi-trailing, and is day length neutral. The series has been entered in regional trials the

past two years and the varieties have excelled in the garden under extreme heat, humidity, and rain. One of the standouts in the Metrolina trial was 'Tea Blue Bicolor'. It manifested a prodigious flower canopy of blue and white bicolor flowers with distinct color

separation and consistency. We have a multitude of Petunia series and colors in the market for diverse spring applications, and this series, based on its color assortment, flower size and garden performance, is worthy of consideration.

11. PETUNIA 'CRAZYTUNIA COSMIC PINK'

Westhoff

This Crazytunia variety was released late last year and did not receive much recognition for the spring 2020 season compared with Peach Bellini, but this is an



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outstanding variety with a strong genetic background. Cosmic Pink is a mutation of Cosmic Purple, which is a mutation of Black Mamba. The flower has a deep violet center and light pink outer petal with a brushed and streaked white margin. Cosmic Pink was in multiple trials this spring and early summer including Costa Farms, Young's Plant Farm and Metrolina. This variety was consistent in all the spring trials and exhibited a vivacious and intense flower color, excellent color separation, color retention and outstanding heat tolerance.

12. DAHLIA 'DAHLEGRIA MAGENTA BICOLOR'

Syngenta Flowers

This new dahlia introduction for 2021 was one of the most floriferous, heat-tolerant and eye-catching dahlias in the Metrolina trial with a strong upright habit and dark foliage, which contrasted strikingly with the magenta bicolor flowers. The garden bed performance was impressive and distinguishable from other dahlia series in the trial. This series now comprises nine varieties including the new Red Improved, Sunrise and Magenta Bicolor. The lineup offers a wide variety of bicolors and solid colors. Dark-leaf dahlias have strong retail appeal and excellent sales velocity due to the flower color and dark foliage combination.



13. COLEUS 'FLAME THROWER CAJUN SPICE'

Ball FloraPlant

The coleus world continues to expand each year with new stand alone varieties, new additions and color improvements to current series. Coleus offers so many features and benefits to the consumer including stunning colors, unusual leaf shapes and textures, late flowering, color stability, heat tolerance and, finally, a multitude of applications including baskets, container combinations and landscape beds. The FlameThrowers manifest all of the attributes listed above and add unique foliage patterns and colorful serrated foliage. I wrote about this series when it was introduced years ago, specifically Spiced Curry, which has performed well in production, retail programs and in landscape beds. Two new colors have been added to the series for 2021, Sriracha and Cajun Spice. Both colors were represented in the trials and Cajun Spice, with its striking orange lanceolate leaves with a serrated green edge and dense foliage, was exceptional and colorful.

14. PETUNIA DURABLOOM SERIES

Dümmen Orange

Dümmen Orange has added to their extensive petunia assortment with a new landscape series for patio containers, large baskets and landscape beds. 'DuraBloom Royal Pink' was available to the market this season and four more varieties have been added to the series for 2021: Electric Lilac, Hot Pink, Purple and Watermelon. I highlighted the vigor, earliness and floriferousness of Hot Pink in the Costa trial in my March article. The series demonstrated a mounded spreading habit, grandiflora size flowers, excellent branching, and heat and humidity tolerance in the Young's and Metrolina trials. Four new DuraBloom Endurable Confettis will be added for large baskets production for 2021: Cherry, Lilac, Beauty and Pink. [gpn](https://www.gpn.com)



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