

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

Petunia EXTRAVAGANZA

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These dazzling and vivacious petunia introductions for 2021 exhibit outstanding garden performance and unique flower patterns.



Vaughn Fletcher is president of Fletcher Consulting. He has been in the horticulture industry since 1971, working in many areas including landscaping, garden center and greenhouse production, greenhouse and nursery sales and sales management. He can be reached at vfletcher9@gmail.com.

It is important to put the evolution and development of seed and vegetative petunias in historical perspective. The breeding and improvements in habit, uniformity, day length neutrality, classes, disease resistance, garden performance, floriferousness and flower patterns has been nothing short of remarkable. The fascinating history of seed petunias has been a long and winding road from the early 1800s, with successive breeding

breakthroughs up through the present day.

The history of vegetative petunias is short but very sweet! In 1991, we had the introduction of the Surfinia series by Suntory, followed by the Proven Winners Supertunia program in 2006. Since those early days, we have seen the proliferation of hundreds of vegetative petunia varieties from multiple international flower breeders.

The focus this month is on the colors, and specifically the flower pattern, of many new introductions for 2021. The production application of these dynamic petunias includes quarts, mixed containers, designer recipes and baskets. Consumers are selecting petunias according to their taste, creating and planting their own combinations, or purchasing ready-made designer mixes composed of many current and new petunia varieties. The varieties I selected are new for 2021 and were on display in

multiple trial sites this spring and summer. They were distinguishable for their color retention, vibrancy, and unique flower patterns and colors.

1. 'SURPRISE SPARKLE RED'

Dümmen Orange

The speckled petunia class expands for 2021 with the introduction of the Surprise Sparkle series consisting of Blue, Magenta, Purple, Burgundy and Red. The varieties were trialed in multiple regions this summer and manifested a mounded, semi-trailing habit with grandiflora flowers, vibrant petals and a pronounced speckled flower pattern. The flower canopy was prolific and colorful throughout the series, and the speckle retention and heat tolerance were outstanding throughout the summer. Sparkle Red is the first speckled red petunia variety in the market and was one of my favorite varieties with its distinctive red petals and striking white speckles. This will be a versatile series with application in quarts, combinations and baskets. This is a petunia that will demand your attention with its energizing and striking flower pattern, and will have outstanding retail appeal.

2. 'ITSY MAGENTA'

Syngenta Flowers

Petunia 'Itsy Magenta' is a standalone variety for 2021 and may be the most impressive petunia I saw during the entire trial season! Why do I make such a

statement? It was ubiquitous in every trial site I visited this summer — in containers, mono baskets and landscape beds. I would like to quote Amy Briggs-Macha, Syngenta product specialist, on her Colorado State presentation this summer, "This plant is small but mighty, tough and tiny." The vibrant magenta flowers are small but prolific and produce incomparable flower coverage. It received high ratings from trial managers and visitors throughout the summer. What impressed me was the exceptional branching, vigor, and floriferousness, and its heat, humidity, and rain tolerance. I used it this summer as a component in my container trials, and it made a beautiful filler and spiller. I loved the way it cascaded over the container with abundant color. It will have exceptional applicability in quarts, combinations and mixed baskets.



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3. 'AMORE HEART AND SOUL'

Danziger

This series began with Queen of Hearts in 2016. There are now seven colors, including the new Heart and Soul with yellow petals and a purple heart pattern. We now have a multitude of standalone bicolor petunia varieties on the market, but the Amores offer a series of unique heart-shaped patterns that are stable and manifest outstanding color separation, uniformity, earliness and excellent weather tolerance in all regions. All seven colors are exuberant eye-catchers with application in quarts, mixed containers and baskets. Many Amore varieties are components in the DuraBella recipe program for 2021. Danziger has a dedicated website that focuses on the Amore series and offers a POS program.

4. 'SURFINIA HEARTBEAT IMPROVED'

Suntory Flowers

This new and improved novelty petunia was exceptional in every trial I visited this summer. The improvements, including a more compact habit and well-defined heart shape color pattern, were evident, and this variety demonstrated the superior heat tolerance that we expect in the Surfinia series. It was trialed in containers, baskets and trial beds, and was consistent, stable, and floriferous in all conditions and regions of the country. The Surfinias were revolutionary when they were introduced, and the series continues to perform and provide longevity throughout the summer and early fall. Surfinia Sweethearts, a new Suntory mixer that is available next season, combines Surfinia Purple Heart and Heartbeat Improved.

5. 'RETRO RED'

Westhoff

This standalone petunia is the harbinger of the next generation of a new novelty petunia series. New colors will be coming in the next few years and will continue to offer multicolored flowers but will manifest greater uniformity and timing than the Crazytunia collection. What stood out in the July and August trials was the uniform flower size, the prolific flower canopy and the heat tolerance. The audacious flower colors of red/magenta with a gold throat were remarkable and striking, and this new variety will have exceptional retail appeal and production versatility in quarts, mixed containers and baskets.

6. 'DEKKO BANANA'

Syngenta Flowers

Syngenta continues to add strong performers to this series, and this year is no exception with the introduction of 'Dekko Banana'. The flower color continued to transition throughout the

summer, and the trumpet-shaped, medium-sized flowers developed into a bright golden yellow. The habit was exceptional with tight internodes, a prolific flower canopy and outstanding heat tolerance. I consider Star Rose the prototype for new Dekko introductions, and Banana has achieved that stature based on summer performance. In the Penn State trial, it was No. 2 out of 102 genera and in the top 20 out of 1,037 entries. There are now 11 core and unique colors in the series. Production application includes quarts, mixed containers and baskets. The Dekko series is a major component in over 20 of the early and mid-season Kwik Kombos.

7. 'SHOCK WAVE PURPLE TIE DYE'

PanAmerican Seed

This bicolor Shock Wave offers an audacious flower pattern consisting of multiple tones of purple-blue and white petals. The flowers will demonstrate transitional color patterns throughout the summer predicated on temperature, light and humidity. The Shock Waves offer a small flowering petunia series with the excellent garden performance of the Wave Family. The flowers are prolific, and the series is versatile in spring retail programs and as a component in multiple Wave Plug and Play combos, and in all mixed containers and baskets.

8. 'CAPELLA CHERRY VANILLA'

Danziger

Four new varieties have been added to this series for 2021: Purple, Salmon, Soft Yellow and Cherry Vanilla. This is becoming a popular series for spring production programs. The series offers uniformity, compactness, vibrancy, earliness, floriferousness and outstanding weather tolerance. I grew Purple in my summer containers, and the color saturation and retention were exceptional. This was also evident in the summer trials. The bicolor Cherry Vanilla, with the cherry-colored center and wide white margin, was attention grabbing as demonstrated by the well-defined and sharp color separation. Versatility in spring production programs with application in quarts, combos and baskets will be an attractive feature of this series.

9. 'BLANKET BLUE STAR'

Green Fuse Botanicals

The Blankets are not a new series, but due to broker exclusivity their market exposure has been limited, and these exceptional varieties have not received the recognition or achieved the market share they deserve. The distribution channel has been opened to the entire broker system for 2021, which will definitely increase sales and retail exposure. The Blanket series has been in multiple trial sites for many years





and has received high praise and recognition for its prolific midsize flowers, dense flower canopy, tight internodes, and heat and rain tolerance. The Blanket name is applicable for this series as it forms a blanket of color in landscape beds and matures quickly in basket production. In my trial visits in late August, this was one of the only petunia series that manifested a consistent and prolific flower canopy. 'Blanket Rose Star' was one of the top performing petunias in the Metrolina trial in North Carolina this year, and 'Blanket Blue Star', with its eye-catching white star and blue margin, was exceptional in the Penn State trial when I visited in mid-August. There are 11 single varieties and five doubles for 2021. This series will provide the consumer with an exceptional mass of abundant color well into early fall.

10. 'SCOOP STRAWBERRY SWIRL'

Danziger

The Scoop series is new for 2021 and offers seven varieties that are uniform, mounded, and naturally compact. The saturated colors are vibrant, brilliant and eye-catching. This series has applicability in high-density programs in packs and quarts but also can be used in patio containers and baskets. Sweet Punch, with deep coral petals and a pure white center, was audacious and distinctive this summer. I posted it on my Facebook page, and it generated more attention than any other petunia. The three varieties with striking bicolor flowers are Strawberry Swirl, Watermelon and Sweet Punch.

11. 'HEADLINER ELECTRIC PURPLE SKY'

Selecta One

Petunia 'Headliner Night Sky' was unparalleled and revolutionary when it was introduced, and Selecta One continues to augment the series with new and unique speckled varieties. The 2021 introductions are Crystal Sky and Electric Purple Sky. They were both in multiple trial sites and demonstrated medium vigor, mounded habit, and excellent flower stability and speckle retention through August. I was impressed with the striking contrast and color separation of Electric Purple Sky. The white flecking was distinctive and offered a strong contrast with the purple petals. Both introductions are a week earlier to flower than Night Sky.

12. 'SPLASH DANCE BOLERO BLUE'

Danziger

Danziger has made momentous breeding advances for 2021 with the introduction of seven new series, novelty varieties and marketing programs. Danziger has entered the speckled pattern petunia market with the novelty Splash Dance varieties, which are Magenta Mambo, Purple Polka and Bolero Blue. I highlighted the strong performance and speckle pattern retention of

Purple Polka in my June article on the Costa Farms trial in Florida. The series was entered in trial sites throughout the country this summer, and I had the opportunity to evaluate them as I traveled from trial to trial. The consistency and stability of all the speckled series in the market varied by trial site, but that is not uncommon with these varieties. 'Splash Dance Bolero Blue', with dark blue petals and white speckles, was vigorous, floriferous and distinctive in multiple trials. We now have a wide selection of new speckled series and varieties to consider for our spring programs. The consumer will use these new colors in patio containers and mixed baskets.

13. 'CRAZYTUNIA AMARENA CREAM'

Westhoff

In my June article, I highlighted the outstanding performance of the new 'Crazytunia Cosmic Pink' in the Costa spring trial, and in the October article on the Colorado State trial I focused on 'Crazytunia Blackberry Jam'. It can be a difficult choice to select a Crazytunia to highlight with nearly 50 varieties available, and growers making variety decisions based on programs, color pattern, and utilization in mixed containers and baskets. The consumer has specific color preferences and color schemes in making a buying decision, and the Crazytunias provide many options. 'Crazytunia Amarena Cream' was one of my favorites this summer for multiple reasons. This variety flowered early and profusely. The habit and branching was more compact than many Crazytunias, and the deep pink magenta petals with white tips and a yellow throat manifested color stability throughout the summer season. The incredible selection of Crazytunia colors offers a diverse color palette unrivaled in the market.

14. 'MAIN STAGE GLACIER SKY'

Selecta One

This article would be incomplete without highlighting this new speckled pattern addition to the Main Stage series. This is the first speckled addition to the Main Stage series, and it offers one of the most significant and incomparable flower patterns in the industry. The flowers manifest a star or speckled pattern on deep blue/purple petals with a distinctive white picotee margin that sets it apart from the competition. This stunning bicolor flower pattern is stable and well defined, and as the white flecks diminish under high day and night temperatures as the summer progresses, the flowers continue to offer the consumer an impactful and unique color combination. It was an exceptional performer in summer trials and one of the top petunia varieties in the Metrolina trial throughout the summer. Main Stage is a vigorous, trailing and larger-flowering series and has application in mixed containers and baskets. [gpn](#)