

A California COMEBACK

After taking 2020 off, CAST returned this year — only with a later timeframe in June — making this year's event the California “Summer” Trials.

BY JASMINA DOLCE

You have likely seen many of our reports from the road, but I will take this extra opportunity here to say just how happy I am that I got to experience one of my favorite industry events again. The vibe and overall energy in California was incredible.

People were smiling, so enthusiastic about their beautiful products, and of course ecstatic that our industry is seeing such a revival right now.

While the event as a whole was a bit scaled back from previous years,

there was still plenty to see. In this month's article I will focus on overall trends and themes I observed while traveling along the coast.

One disclaimer: Some items that I discuss may have been introduced last year, so they're not NEW new. But many of the exhibitors felt it was still important to convey last year's messaging, since they weren't able to properly do so in 2020.

Stay tuned next month where I dive into all the new variety introductions.



Marigold 'Endurance
Sunset Gold'
Syngenta Flowers



Celosia 'Arrabona Red'
Hem Genetics

CELOSIA, MARIGOLD AND LAVENDER... OH MY!

I've been attending CAST for over a decade now, and there are always a few crop categories that experience a lot of attention at the breeder level. Last CAST, I think I saw either begonias or hydrangeas at every single virtual stop. This year, it was celosia, marigold and lavender.

Last year, **Benary** introduced its Brainiac series, which is a reliable bench-run option with its tight habit.

Bred by researchers in Eastern Europe, 'Arrabona Red' from **Hem Genetics** offers a multicolor effect on a rock solid stem. More colors are in the pipeline.

Beekenkamp's Kelos Lunar is a cristata type that flowers all summer long. Every break has a flower, and it is daylength neutral.

Endurance is a new series from **Syngenta Flowers** that features the extra-large flowers of an African marigold on the compact habit of a French marigold.

'Xochi Orange' is a new summer and fall cut flower marigold from **BloomStudios**, Ball's new cut flower brand. A lovely option for Halloween celebrations!

The Super Hero series was introduced by **Benary** a few years ago and has continued to grow since with many color options. The new Deep Yellow replaces Yellow.

Lavenize is a new series from **Pacific Plug & Liner** that is bred to stay short and compact. Many varieties are available, early to late blooming — and they're perfect in the landscape.

Dümmen Orange has created an umbrella brand for its lavender, La Diva, which offers growers spring through fall options. 'La Diva Big Night' is hardy to Zone 6 and boasts large flowers on gray-green foliage.

On display at Syngenta Flowers was **Think Plants'** 'Layla Blue' lavender, which is bred by **Danziger**, is first-year flowering, requires little to no PGRs and is highly fragrant.



Lavender 'La Diva Big Night'
Dümmen Orange



Marigold 'Xochi Orange'
BloomStudios



Lavender Lavenize
Pacific Plug & Liner



Celosia 'Kelos Lunar Magenta'
Beekenkamp



Marigold 'Super Hero Deep Yellow'
Benary



Lavender 'Layla Blue'
Think Plants



Celosia Brainiac series
Benary

THE EVOLUTION OF MIXES

Mixed combinations have been around for years but continue to gain popularity at the consumer level. Breeders continue to trial various crops, mixing and matching anything and everything, to create absolute success in the garden.

Dümmen Orange introduced a new Better Together program that offers growers combinations that go the distance in exciting planter presentations. The idea is to pair Great Falls coleus with l'Conia begonias (part sun/shade), Magnum New Guinea impatiens (shade) and Big EEZE geraniums (sun).

Sakata has been experimenting with mixing its seed and vegetative varieties to create unique combinations — for example its 'Dragon's Breath' celosia and Sunpatiens impatiens.

At **Benary**, their herb mixes were a big hit. They put together combinations with crops such as oregano, thyme and rosemary — which would make a wonderful gift for the chef in the house. Father's Day promo, perhaps?

Patriotic mixes were all the rage up and down the coast, which were incredibly timely at the end of June. We loved this Lady Liberty catharanthus mix at **Suntory** and Confetti Garden Stars and Stripes Honor at **Dümmen Orange**.

Lady Liberty
Suntory



Better Together combos
Dümmen Orange



Confetti Garden Stars
and Stripes Honor
Dümmen Orange



Herb mixes
Benary



Mixing seed and
vegetative
Sakata



Mandala kalanchoe
Selecta One



Begonia 'T Rex Stardust'
Think Plants



OUTSIDE IN

News flash: Houseplants are in. OK, you don't need me to tell you that. But your options are becoming more and more diverse. Check out these perfect indoor plants that are versatile and low maintenance.

Begonia 'T Rex Stardust' from Terra Nova Nurseries was at the **Think Plants** display at Syngenta Flowers and offers such dynamic and vivid color. This perennial is bred with cold tolerance and vigor in mind but also doubles as an indoor plant. Mandala is a new kalanchoe series from **Selecta One** that features uniformity across all colors and will make an incredible display at retail.

Kitchen Minis
PanAmerican Seed



No garden? No problem. **PanAmerican Seed's** Kitchen Minis program was introduced last year and presents varieties that are ready to place inside on a sunny counter or windowsill. And they'll produce tasty veggies over four to six weeks.

2021
CAST

SUMMER IN THE SOUTH

The Southern market is increasingly important as new plants are introduced. The need for plants that can bloom early enough, withstand the heat and humidity, and require little water is apparent at the breeder level as these characteristics were a huge focus during this year's trials.

The Elegante cyclamen collection from **Schoneveld Breeding** is the result of many years of breeding work in hot and humid climates. Flowers are medium in size and make a great fall crop.

Suntory's Soiree catharanthus are already known for their extreme heat tolerance. This new sub-series, Flamenco, are like no other vinca, with showy ruffled petals and striking bicolors.

Bred under extreme conditions, Hi-Lite is a new torenia series from **Syngenta Flowers** that resists stretch and does not fade. They are perfect for borders as well as combinations.

CannonBall is a new petunia series that replaces **Ball FloraPlant's** Sun Spun series. Perfect for Southern markets, it blooms very early and is easy to grow in hanging baskets and containers.

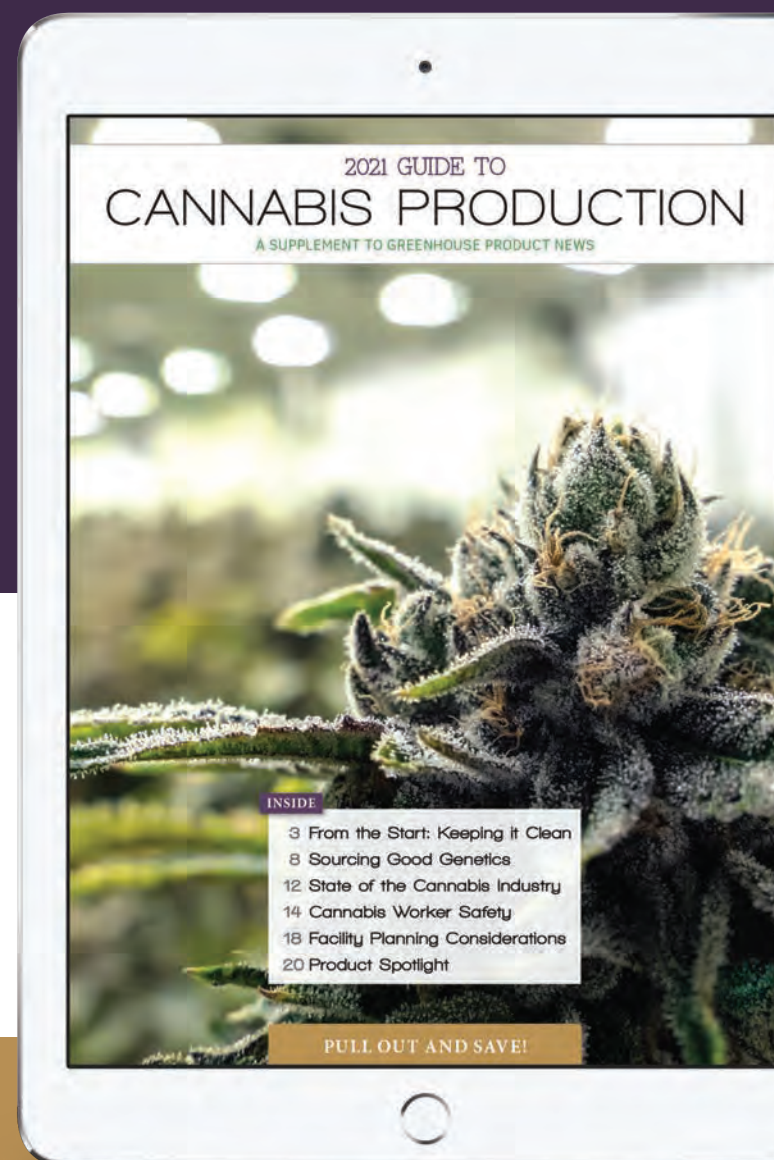


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THE YEAR OF THE YELLOW PETUNIA

In case you didn't know by now, 2021 is the year of the petunia. Well, don't quote me on that. It's certainly not an official designation! But yellow petunias are definitely trending right now. In the past, it seemed almost impossible to get that truly deep yellow coloration on a petunia. Not anymore! Check these out.

'Sanguna Banana Candy'
Syngenta Flowers

'Good & Plenty Mustard'
Green Fuse Botanicals

'Bee's Knees'
Ball FloraPlant

'SuperCal Premium
Yellow Sun'
Sakata

Salvia trial
Pacific Plug & Liner

Cuphea 'Hummingbird's Lunch'
Plant Haven

Buddleia 'Summer
Bird Midnight Blue'
Benary+

Salvia 'Hummingbird Falls'
Dümmen Orange

E3 Easy Wave petunia
PanAmerican Seed

Cora XDR vinca
Syngenta Flowers

Bandolero lantana
Syngenta Flowers

A POLLINATOR'S PALETTE

Attracting pollinators has become increasingly important to gardeners. Not only do they enjoy the visitors to their gardens, but they also want to create an environmentally friendly sanctuary for their pollinator friends.

Midnight Blue is a new color addition to the buddleia Summer Bird series from **Benary+**. It is a dwarf plant with huge, dramatic flowers.

On display at **Dümmen Orange** was Plant Haven's new hanging basket salvia, 'Hummingbird Falls', which displays blue flowers on a vigorous and heat-tolerant plant.

Another **Plant Haven** plant receiving lots of pollinator love was cuphea 'Hummingbird's Lunch', which offers bright, cherry red flowers on a tidy round habit.

This year, the folks at **Pacific Plug & Liner** conducted a salvia comparison trial. And the bees were simply buzzing across each and every one of these plants. (Read more about this salvia trial in the October issue of GPN).

TRUE LANDSCAPE DISPLAY

With CAST taking place later in the year, one advantage was to experience and observe variety performance in actual summer conditions and in in-ground plantings. Many exhibitors took this opportunity to show off their plants in a true garden setting. **gpn**