

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

1

ALL STAR Begonias

These begonia selections for the 2021 trials were colorful and resilient.



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.

Two years ago, I wrote an article on new begonia varieties and have focused on specific varieties in previous and subsequent articles. The diversity and uniqueness of the new begonia introductions from multiple breeders continue to grow and expand, and offer growers and ultimate consumers myriad choices with a kaleidoscope of colors; single and double flowers; light and dark leaf types; and upright and pendulous habits. The current and new introductions offer production versatility and consumer applicability in patio containers and baskets in sun or shade predicated on the variety.

Begonia representation in summer field and container trials is significant and expanding every year, and the exposure and performance is reflected in spring production programs nationwide. My evaluation and description of begonia varieties in this article was based on visits to Metrolina, Plantpeddler, Lucas Greenhouses, Penn State, Mast Young Plants, Raker-Roberta's and Colorado State University in August and early September.

Many of the varieties I chose were in multiple trials, and I selected current and new introductions to highlight based on the attributes of foliage quality, vigor, floriferousness, flower stability, distinctive flower forms, habit, flower colors and weather tolerance.

1. 'SOLENIA APRICOT'

Beekenkamp

The Solenia series has been an integral part of many begonia programs for years.

Current and new Solenia varieties are entered in summer trials every year to demonstrate their uniformity, durability, versatility in containers, and exceptional sun and heat tolerance. Performance of this series is well documented, and the characteristics of day length neutrality, uniform branching, mildew resistance, negligible dead heading, and prolific multi-petaled flowers create a vibrant and colorful season extending series. The series consists of eight colors; shown is 'Solenia Apricot' from the Lucas Greenhouse trial. With the bicolor flowers and peach and yellow undertones, it is a colorful standout and one of the most unique colors in the Solenia assortment.

2. 'FIONA PINK'

American Takii

This is the only *Begonia semperflorens* selection in the article, and it caught my attention in multiple trials. The series is comprised of four colors: Red, introduced in 2019, followed by Rose, Pink, and White in 2020. Red received the prestigious Fleuroselect Gold Medal following its introduction and summer performance in international trials. The additional colors have manifested the same characteristics



as Red, which are lustrous green foliage, extra early double flowers, excellent uniformity, self-cleaning with outstanding garden performance, and adaptability in field and container trials. The series was in shaded and sun exposure sites with similar results and will mature at eight to 10 inches. We have many outstanding semperflorens series available for spring programs, and Fiona is a viable option with application in landscape sites, baskets, mixed containers, and patio pots. The accompanying photo was taken at Penn State in late August.

3. 'DREAMS VERMILLION HOT PINK'

Beekenkamp

Beekenkamp offers a diverse portfolio of Begonia Dreams Collections and series, including Beauvilia, Waterfall, Fragrant Falls, BK, Solenia and the Ilona collection. Beekenkamp varieties are widely used in spring programs. One of my favorite begonias since its introduction is 'Vermillion Red' within the BK Collection. It has been a standout performer in trials and spring production programs. It manifests one of the most intense, vivid and deepest reds within the Begonia



impressive display of the series was in the Metrolina shade trial where all the colors demonstrated uniformity, tight branching and floriferousness. The vibrancy, flower size and color saturation of Double Red was particularly eye catching. The photograph is from that visit in mid August. We have a wide assortment of boliviensis varieties available from multiple breeders, and this series is deserving of consideration based on its attributes and summer performance.

6. 'SHINE BRIGHT YELLOW'

Westhoff

Westhoff offers an impressive array of boliviensis collections and series for 2022. The Shine Bright boliviensis series consists of seven varieties and one mix for this spring. It was at multiple southern and northern trials last summer in containers and baskets. The habit, structure, floriferousness and summer performance in sun or shade was consistent; what stood out was the upward facing flowers, dense branching and prolific flower canopy. The photograph is from the Plantpeddler container trial, where 'Shine Bright Yellow' was striking and colorful. This series has production application in quarts and baskets.

7. 'NONSTOP JOY RED'

Benary

The Benary portfolio of seed varieties is the most extensive and diverse in the industry, and the introduction of 'Nonstop Joy Yellow' at CAST in 2015 expanded the range and applicability of this series. 'Nonstop Joy Yellow', with vivid and intense large double flowers, excellent basal branching, a semi-trailing habit, and earliness, was extraordinary in summer trials that year and in subsequent years and, most importantly, in spring production programs. This series is expanding for 2022 with the introduction of three new colors, Orange, Rose Picotee and Red, as well as a mix. These new colors manifested the attributes of the Yellow in multiple summer trials with dense branching and a prolific semi trailing flower canopy. I grew the Rose Picotee in my container trial in filtered shade and it flowered all summer. The photograph of 'Nostop Joy Red' was from the Plantpeddler trial and it demonstrated the outstanding architecture and branching of the series. The Nonstop Joy Yellow was utilized in quarts, mixed containers and basket production last year and, based on performance and the vibrant flower colors,

genera. The 'Vermillion Hot Pink' is a worthy companion to Red. Pink is not generally an intense color in nature, but this is a unique color and offers vibrancy and intensity with eye-catching prolific double flowers. It is free flowering with a dense rounded habit, and it demonstrated excellent summer performance in containers and baskets in multiple summer trials. The photograph was from the shaded Metrolina basket trial in mid August.

4. 'GRACE PINK'

Syngenta Flowers

The three colors in this series, Dark Red, Pink and Orange, are characterized by a pendulous habit, outward facing double flowers, dense branching and excellent heat tolerance. The series was displayed in multiple trials, and I was impressed by the medium vigorous habit of the series, which will improve shippability and offer versatility in assorted container programs. The accompanying photograph is from the Plantpeddler trial. Liners are offered by Lucas Greenhouses and Plantpeddler for this spring.

5. 'RIVULET RED'

Ball Ingenuity

The word rivulet describes the characteristics of this new boliviensis begonia series. It manifested a stream of medium-sized single and double flowers that were on display in multiple trials last summer. I was impressed with the vigor, uniformity, heat tolerance, semi trailing habit and free flowering of the entire series. The five colors for 2022 are Blush, Deep Rose, Orange, Pink and Double Red. The series received excellent performance ratings at UGA and Penn State, and I thought the most



growers will definitely incorporate these new colors into their program for 2022 and beyond.

8. 'T'CONIA LEMON BERRY'

Dümmen Orange

The I'conia series continues to expand every year, and we have two eye-catching I'conia introductions for 2022: 'I'conia Scentiment Peachy Keen', which I highlighted in last summer's Costa trial article, and 'I'conia Lemon Berry', which is unmatched for its dark pointed leaves and its unique transitional bicolor flowers with soft lemon yellow centers and rose pink outer petals that will lighten or darken predicated on heat and light. Lemon Berry manifests striking bicolor flowers and is easily identifiable among a multitude of begonia varieties. It was trialed in containers and baskets in sun and shade last year; the photograph is from the Raker-Roberta's hanging basket trial the first week of September. This is a variety that will have significant impact and retail appeal in quarts, mixed containers and baskets.

9. 'FLORENCIO ORANGE'

Syngenta Flowers

This interspecific series was introduced in 2020 and was in production programs throughout the country last spring. It offers the attributes of the hybrida-type begonias with exceptional heat tolerance and flower power. What was striking in the trials last summer was the uniformity, bright petals, well branched habit, upward facing position of the flowers and heat tolerance. There are six colors in the series, including Cerise for 2022. This series has outstanding potential and applicability in wholesale and retail programs with its durability and tight habit which improves shippability. The series is recommended for partial sun to shade and consumers will use this series in patio pots, combinations and baskets. The top seller for 2021 was Orange, which I have shown in the photograph from the Plantpeddler trial.

10. 'VIKING EXPLORER ROSE ON GREEN'

Sakata

We have seen the breeding, trialing and introduction of exciting begonia series in seed form from multiple breeders the past few years. Sakata introduced the Viking and Viking XXL series last year. Both series were in regional trials throughout the country and received outstanding trial scores. The 'Viking XXL Red on Chocolate' earned an AAS award for its consistent and superior performance. Both series have applications in containers and the landscape. Sakata has expanded its begonia introductions with the new Viking Explorer series, which included Red on Green introduced last year, and Rose on Green, which is new for 2022. The features of this series are its semi-trailing habit, earliness and floriferousness. The benefits include durability, heat tolerance and eye-catching color

with application in sun or shade. Both varieties were in southern and northern trials and manifested outstanding heat tolerance, prolific flowering, glossy foliage and a controlled trailing habit. This is one of the most exciting and unique trailing begonias to enter the market in many years, and was augmented by the announcement by All-America Selections last November recognizing 'Viking Explorer Rose on Green' not only as an AAS winner, but also elevating and recognizing this variety with a Gold Medal for its superior garden performance and genetic advancements. This is the highest award given by AAS, and is awarded based on testing in all regions of the country and evaluation by a diverse group of judges. In every trial I visited last summer, Rose on Green and Red on Green were superb and demonstrated the flowering potential, durability, and resilience that we demand in a plant and ultimately will provide the consumer with success and satisfaction. These two varieties will have application in containers, landscapes and specifically baskets where they will be an exemplary series. Plugs will be available in assorted sizes from multiple suppliers. The photograph is from the Raker-Roberta's basket trial in early September.

11. 'WATERFALL ANGEL SOFT PINK'

Beekenkamp

This interspecific series is comprised of two dazzling and attention-grabbing varieties, Waterfall Angel Soft Orange and Waterfall Angel Soft Pink. Both varieties offer a prolific canopy of ostentatious two-tone single flowers. The series is not new but is entered in trial sites every year to demonstrate the summer resilience, the compact and semi-trailing habit, and the floriferous canopy. 'Waterfall Angel Soft Pink' was especially vivacious in the Plantpeddler and Mast Young Plants trials. The two colors are exceptional in basket and patio container programs. The photograph is from the Plantpeddler trial.

12. 'RISE UP SALMON CHIFFON'

Westhoff

The Rise Up collection is an assortment of 12 single and double-flowering varieties with wide-ranging colors. These are tuberous hybrid selections with large stable flowers, a dense habit with flowers positioned above the foliage, and distinctive bicolor flowers with diverse color tones. The series has demonstrated outstanding performance in trials and spring production programs. The accompanying photograph was from the Metrolina trial in mid-August grown in 50% shade. If there is one characteristic that comes to mind when reflecting on the attributes of this series, it is the exceptional branching. Production application includes quarts, patio containers and baskets. In addition, the new stunning bicolor Begonia Rise Up Harlequin is new for 2022 and will be offered by multiple liner suppliers this spring. [gpn](https://www.gpn.com)