

CAST and the Power of Connecting

For us marketers in the horticulture industry, events and trade shows are paramount. We spend the whole year forming ideas and dissecting market trends to better link with our colleagues, customers, and other related cohorts, with the goal to grow loyalty and enhance trust. From technically focused product launches to the most memorable and whimsical vignettes, we aim to educate, inspire and, most importantly, connect!

I have had the pleasure of working in marketing at Syngenta Flowers for almost 12 years. That means I have been involved with a California Spring Trials event 12 times. I also have had the pleasure of working with and learning from others who have been to dozens of CAST events throughout their careers in horticulture, and with flower breeding companies specifically.

Each time is new, with similar elements that come back like muscle memory, and each one is challenging too, full of blood, sweat, and even some tears. There are always lists of new products to launch, core

products to reinforce, and technical data to share, but I have learned that the relationships formed and fostered at CAST are far more important than any of the plants on display.

Don't get me wrong; we love our plants. I'd argue we love them much more than the average person. We wear the title of plant nerd like a badge of honor, even competing for the top nerd award, but something truly magical happens when our teams are together. Marketing, product management, R&D, technical services, sales and customer service among others combine efforts and unite for an exceptional cause. We are all playing from one playbook, pulling in one direction for the common goal of service to our customers who, in most cases, happen to be our friends, too.

A HISTORY OF RELATIONSHIPS

Syngenta Flowers has a long legacy of CAST. With the inception of Pack Trials in the late 1960s, patriarch of Goldsmith Seeds, Glenn Goldsmith, invited broker salespeople to view comparison trials of his new hybrid flowers. The timing was chosen for spring because growers were busy, and he could use that time to educate these reps about his new products for the next season. A few decades have reshaped Pack Trials into what is now celebrated as Spring Trials, and I have long been proud to be somehow tied to that original company icon who started it all. It began as a way to connect people with plants — and the people were the focus!

While we don't often showcase too many "packs" anymore, we aim to make CAST enjoyable and educational for all who visit ... heck, even our competitors. We use creative marketing

ideas and themes to bring folks together for a fun and common goal. Our venue in Gilroy, California, is not only the hub of our flower breeding and technical trialing in North America, but our landscaped grounds are postcard-worthy and beautifully welcoming to visitors traveling the long journey to California every spring.

Many companies don't have the benefit of having their facilities located here, but for me, inviting industry friends and customers to our home base is significantly meaningful. It's an opening of our doors, an invitation to see what we do and how we care for each other on our own turf. For Syngenta Flowers, it's not just another trade show tent, it's like opening our home to our guests, and to me and my team, that is important.

The days of CAST are long, starting very early and typically ending quite late. For us working the show, it is tiring yet invigorating, a rewarding culmination of our year's work on display. We get to greet with hugs, see smiling faces, answer hard questions and hone our craft as plantsmen. For me, you can't beat the togetherness that this event brings. Many nights, when the last customer has left our campus, the remaining teammates gather to share positive stories, celebrate company wins and, most importantly, applaud our other colleagues' successes. CAST also gives us a chance to spend quality time with our coworkers from teams we don't often see, and it is a great time to connect.

As a 40 Under 40 alum, every year I look forward to learning who the next batch of winners are and remember how honored I felt to be featured with the Class of 2015. The opportunities to meet people during GPN's ceremony and networking events during Cultivate bolstered my connections with other industry folks. Being able to now spot other fellow alumni and have an instant connection with them is a fun way to network. I strongly encourage other FUFs (short for 40 Under 40; at Syngenta we speak in acronyms) to network! For me, and my current role at Syngenta Flowers as customer marketing manager, this is what drives me. That connection to our various customers, and the ability to network and create new friendships is, in my opinion, much more valuable than the plants. [gpn](#)



Olivia (Sellards) Morgan is the custom marketing manager at Syngenta Flowers and a member of GPN's 40 Under 40 Class of 2015. She can be reached at olivia.morgan@syngenta.com.