



A shop full of Syngenta Flowers at CAST.

Trends FROM CAST

BY STEPHEN KLOOSTERMAN

Just like crows looking for things that are bright, new and shiny, GPN staff once again flew out to California Spring Trials to see the plants.

Most of the plants will be available to growers for 2023 retail. Those who have been

to CAST before may relate: Each stop on the trip seems more amazing than the last, and the vivid plants compete for space in one's visual memory. We plan to analyze some of our experiences with articles in our June and July issues — this is the first of the two articles.

While no two of the new plant varieties we saw looked quite alike, we did notice some general trends or themes among the breeders. Dianthus, begonia and salvia were all quite popular.

Diverse flower varieties debuted during California Spring Trials in April. Everyone had something different, but a few themes did emerge.



Snapdragon 'Opus III Pink'
Syngenta Flowers



Ptilotus 'Matilda'
Benary



Brassica Crane Ruffle Series
Takii Seed

CUT FLOWER RESURGENCE

There was a decided emphasis on cut flowers at several stops. While COVID-19 disrupted imports and supply chains, it also pushed or allowed more workers to spend more time at their homes, and the cut flower industry appears to be on the up and up.

Independent domestic growers are supplying more cut flowers via direct sales and partnering with local flower shops.

Syngenta Flowers showed off several varieties for its cut flower program, including snapdragons, dahlias and sunflowers. Snapdragon 'Opus III Pink' (shown) was among the cut flowers at CAST that wowed attendees. Also of interest from Syngenta were delphiniums such as the Excalibur series and the zinnias 'Uproar Rose' and 'Zowie Yellow Flame'.

A notable new addition to **Benary's** cut-flower offerings that debuted at CAST was ptilotus 'Matilda', marketed as "the beautiful and sassy sister" of Benary's ptilotus 'Joey'. 'Matilda' is for the cut flower market with 3- to 4-inch bottlebrush spikes that are silver with dark neon pink tips. Offered as an Apex Seed, it has a high germination rate and a high percentage of transplantable plugs, according to Benary.

Sakata debuted lisianthus Voyage 3 for cut flowers. Sold in a pelleted form, Voyage 3 is ready for harvest in 22 to 24 weeks and its stems grow to 24 to 36 inches. The champagne-colored

double flowers are larger and with a higher petal count than its predecessor, Voyage 2. In addition to the new variety, Sakata also debuted new colors of its other lisianthus series, including Mariachi, Voyage 2, and Rosanne 2, and also its Matthiola incana stock Quartet.

For those looking to add a brassica to their lineup of cut flowers, **Takii Seed** introduced brassica F1 Crane Ruffle as a new leaf type in their Crane series of cut-flower type of flowering kale. Ruffle features a more vigorous growth habit than the standard and feather leaf kale in Takii's Crane series. Available in Red, Rose, White and Bicolor, F1 Crane Ruffle features ruffled leaf edges. Stem length is 24 to 35 inches.

PanAmerican Seed of the Ball Horticultural Co. debuted a number of new offerings for cut flowers for 2023. Of particular interest was matthiola 'Mathilda Antique Rose', which has been bred for maximum yield and uniform production under moderate temperatures and light levels. Stems are about 25 to 32 inches in length. Harvesting is recommended when three to five florets have opened.



Lisianthus
'Voyage 3
Champagne'
Sakata



Matthiola 'Mathilda Antique Rose'
PanAmerican Seed

DIVERSE DIANTHUS

Some of the most exciting and varied entries at CAST were in the dianthus genus, with several breeders showing off the diverse and beautiful traits of their plants.

Green Fuse Botanicals' dianthus 'Constant Cadence Potpourri' is full of shades of pink, rose and orange throughout the plant. Recommended for early spring through spring in containers, the variety is very heat tolerant and will continue to flower even when temperatures rise. Constant Cadence can then be planted in the garden for use as a seasonal perennial. It can be grown one plant per quart pot, or three plants per gallon pot, in six to nine weeks.

It's also possible to grow one plant out to a gallon container in nine to 12 weeks.

Westhoff's dianthus Best Friends Forever series is being marketed as the perfect potted gift item. Plants are loaded with flowers and available in six different colors (shown here in combo with each

other). BFFs are easy to produce and continuously bloom and re-bloom with little or no effort for the grower or gardener.

PlantHaven showcased 'American Pie Berry à la Mode', a new hybrid plant. Named for its white flowers with magenta centers, it also features blue-green foliage and long, sturdy stems. It features a compact mounding habit, about 11 by 11 inches, and will repeat its spring bloom again in summer and fall.

Dianthus 'Falling in Love Rosie' by **Ball Ingenuity** is being marketed as the first hanging basket-type dianthus on the market. It fills out its containers quickly and features beautiful bright-pink blooms that cascade over the side of containers. It offers repeat blooming from spring through summer for a lasting stream of color. It is supplied as a rooted or unrooted cutting.

BEGONIAS BE BREEDIN'

Hybrids and other begonia innovations at CAST showed how much breeders still can do to find unique plants in the genus.

A new hybrid addition to **Green Fuse's** Lifestyle Collection, 'Citizen Cane Pink' is the first in its series. It excels both indoors and outdoors.



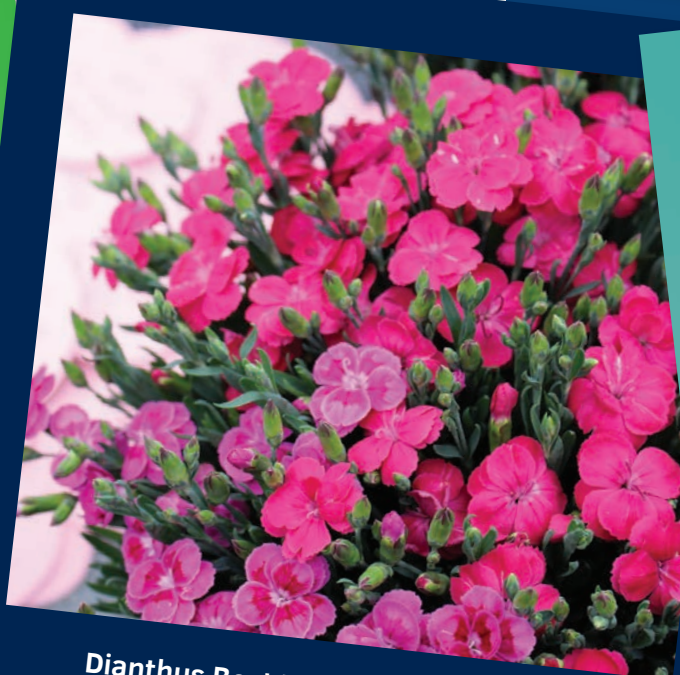
Dianthus 'American Pie Berry à la Mode'
PlantHaven



Dianthus 'Falling in Love Rosie'
Ball Ingenuity



Dianthus 'Constant Cadence Potpourri'
Green Fuse Botanicals



Dianthus Best Friends Forever Series
Westhoff



Begonia 'Citizen Cane Pink'
Green Fuse Botanicals



Begonia 'Hula Red'
PanAmerican Seed



Begonia Dreams BEEL 4676
Beekenkamp

It has dark foliage with a striking leaf pattern and beautiful pink flowers with strong fragrance all growing season. Tight internodes and strong stems make Citizen Cane easy to ship.

PanAmerican Seed's Hula is a highly branched plant with many small flowers and a trailing habit that makes it a good fit for baskets and containers. It is extremely early to flower and begins to spread at an early stage. Colors include Red (shown), Pink, Blush and Bicolor (red and white).

An experimental elatior-type begonia in **Beekenkamp's** Dreams line of the plants, BEEL 4676 is a good example of the company's pipeline of new begonia varieties from its extensive breeding program. In addition to breeding new varieties, the Netherlands-based company has conducted worldwide tests in different climate zones and conditions — and has even done shelf-life tests of many plants in its Dreams collection.

SALIVATING FOR SALVIA

The diversity of the salvia genus was on display at CAST with many breeders including unique plants in their presentations. The ability of plants in the genus to thrive under a wide range of conditions makes

them a desirable choice for many gardeners.

Salvia 'Sallyfun Blue Lagoon' from **Danziger** has rich, blue flowers that last through the summer season. It is a heat-tolerant salvia that has an early and uniform bloom with strong radial branching. It works great in gallons, combinations and the landscape. Pollinators love it and so do home gardeners because it is easy to grow.

A butterfly attractor, **Jaldety Nursery's** salvia 'Ping Pong' is easy to care for and requires little maintenance. It has dark raspberry pink flowers that stand out on the green foliage. 'Ping Pong' has an upright habit and is well-branched. It is hardy to Zones 7 to 9.

HilverdaFlorist's Salgoon series is fast-flowering and vigorous with many side shoots. Plants grow uniformly and have a heavy bloom set. A great garden performer, it is also a hummingbird and bee attractor. Five new colors are available: Lake Garda, Lake Titicaca, Lake Onega, Lake Victoria and Lake Baikal. [gpn](#)



Salvia 'Sallyfun Blue Lagoon'
Danziger



Salvia 'Ping Pong'
Jaldety Nursery



Salvia Salgoon Series
HilverdaFlorist