

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

VIGOROUS, VIBRANT & UNIQUE *Introductions* — PART 2

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Costa Premier Spring Trial showcases a diverse range of new annual introductions.

This article highlights new annuals in the Costa Premier Spring Trial from my late February visit. In my May article, I covered 10 unique and distinctive varieties from seven international flower breeders; in this article, I have focused on 10 additional new introductions, including impatiens, nemesia, pentas, petunia, salvia, SunPatiens, tradescantia and vinca. These selections were visually powerful and manifested uniqueness, vigor, vibrancy and floriferousness. The upcoming July and August articles will cover my evaluation of the Costa Premier Basket and Perennial Trial from my late April visit.

1. 'SUNPATIENS COMPACT LILAC IMPROVED'

Sakata

This article would be incomplete without highlighting the new SunPatiens varieties for 2023. This may be the most ubiquitous series in the market, so a brief description is redundant. I will mention the new colors and highlight the new Compact Lilac Improved. The new compact varieties include the bicolors, Lavender Splash and Purple Candy, as well as Classic White and Lilac Improved. In the vigorous class we have the new Peach Candy and Pretty Pink. The new introductions were in landscape and row beds in the trial, flowering profusely, which made it difficult to highlight one variety. I selected the new Compact Lilac Improved, which was in the Sakata bed at the trial entrance and the vibrancy, brightness, and floriferousness were dazzling. The improvements for 2023 are audacious color, earliness and improved branching. These attributes were unmistakable in all locations in the trial. The color diversity



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of all the new introductions enhances the entire SunPatiens program.

2. IMPATIENS SOLARSCAPE SERIES

PanAmerican Seed

The new Solarscape F1 interspecific impatiens — comprised of four new varieties: Magenta Bliss, Neon Purple, Orange Burst and White Shimmer — was trialed in rows and landscape beds. This series is considered breakthrough genetics and unique to the industry, offering the first interspecific impatiens

series from seed. The series will mature at 10 to 18 inches, offering outstanding landscape and homeowner versatility with utilization in full sun or shade locations and in landscape beds and patio containers. The grower can incorporate this series into pack, quart or mixed container programs. The Solarscape series will offer a multitude of attributes, including durability, minimal maintenance, low input cost and assorted tropical flower colors. Flower breeders are continually focusing on the breeding and introduction of distinctive and unmatched series and varieties that fill a niche or need, and this new impatiens series achieves that goal. The accompanying photograph is 'Solarscape Orange Burst', one of the most striking colors in the trial. The tropical flower colors were vibrant and stable, and matched the colors in the CAST trial. The series will be well represented in trials throughout the country this summer to allow visitors to evaluate its performance.

3. TRADESCANTIA PISTACHIO

Green Fuse Botanicals

It is only fitting that one of the first tropical foliage plants to enter the Costa bed trial is a tradescantia. This is a genus comprised of 85 species divided into five subspecies with myriad colors, textures and leaf forms. The spiderwort varieties we are familiar with are identified by common names, including Purple Heart, Inch Plant and Tricolor. We have been using many of these varieties for years as accents in mixed containers and basket programs. We have seen in the past five years the resurgence of the tropical plant industry and the formation of foliage programs and collections from many different plant breeders. There are many new and exciting tradescantia varieties, and the new Pistachio from Green Fuse Botanicals is the first of many new foliage

plants that they will introduce in coming years. It manifested vigor, a well-defined white margin with green veination, excellent heat tolerance and a vigorous trailing habit in the trial bed. This variety is recommended for shade or partial sun in landscape beds and deco containers, and it will be an outstanding accent component in baskets.

4. PETUNIA 'FUN HOUSE AMETHYST SUNRISE'

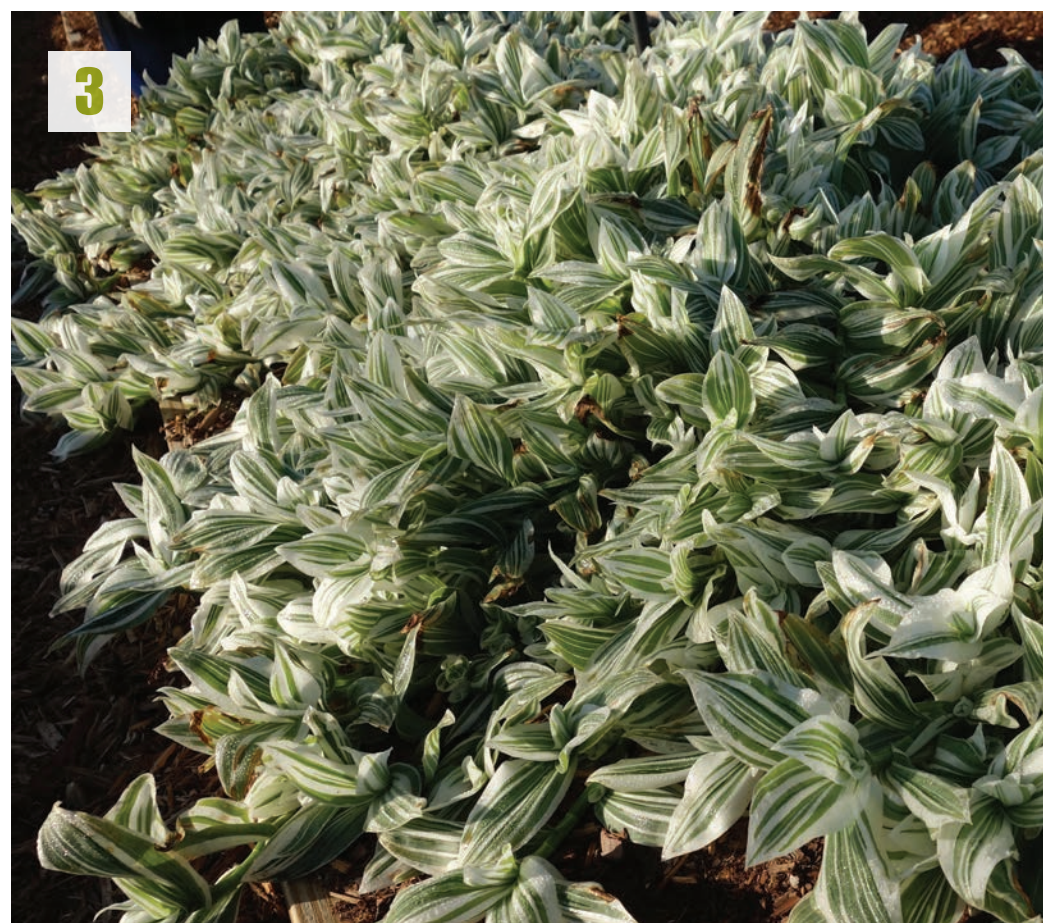
Syngenta

The breeding, marketing, introduction and production of novel, unique and multicolored petunias from multiple breeders continues unabated, and Syngenta entered this arena last year with 'Fun House Potpourri', the first in a series of dynamic novelty varieties. We have three introductions for 2023: Papaya, Peach Melba and Amethyst Sunrise. They are slightly more vigorous than Potpourri and earlier to flower having a 9.5-hour minimum photoperiod requirement. All three were in the Costa trial, and I could have selected any one of them to highlight, but my favorite was Amethyst Sunrise, a distinctive bicolor with a golden, yellow eye and violet-purple petals. This variety was trialed in the beds and as a component in assorted containers. The Fun House collection will have production applications in quarts, mixed baskets and deco containers. The accompanying photograph illustrates the beauty of Amethyst Sunrise in containers. The Syngenta website offers concise technical information on the production of this petunia collection.

5. PETUNIA 'HEADLINER LIGHT PINK SKY'

Selecta One

Selecta consistently enhances the diversity and uniqueness of the speckled petunia class with new introductions almost every year. There are three Headliner



introductions for 2023: Light Pink Sky, Pink Sky and Strawberry Sky. These three varieties match the current varieties with a mounded trailing habit, vigor, large vivid flowers and, most importantly, color stability. The speckled pattern in Light Pink Sky in the CAST trial was

consistent in color and stability with those same attributes of the variety in the Costa trial. Selecta now offers eight Headliner Sky colors, as well as the vigorous 'Main Stage Glacier Sky' and the compact 'Starlet Midnight Sky'. The 'Headliner Night Sky' continues to be one of the top-



selling petunias. Enchanted Sky, which I highlighted in my article about the Costa trial last year, is one of my favorites with its violet and purple petals and white central star. It was a component in many basket programs this spring. The accompanying photo



of Light Pink Sky is eye-catching and bright.

6. NEMESIA FRUTICANS 'AROMANCE MULBERRY'

Proven Winners

One plant attribute that I very rarely mention in my articles is



fragrance, and one genus we are all familiar with that provides those aroma compounds is nemesia. We have a multitude of series in the marketplace possessing assorted colors and sizes with varying degrees of summer performance. Aromance

is a fitting name for this new nemesia. I inhaled the powerful sweet fragrance as it diffused through the air while I walked down the trial bed in the Proven Winners section. 'Aromance Pink' was introduced last year and 'Aromance Mulberry' is new for 2023. This variety was planted in beds and containers, has a strong upright habit, and has eye-catching lavender and fuchsia bicolor flowers. This is an early-flowering variety and matures at 10 to 18 inches. The accompanying photograph demonstrates the upright habit and the prolific flower canopy mixed with Proven Winners components. I look forward to evaluating the heat tolerance of this variety in late April on my return visit to Costa and in regional summer trials.

7. SALVIA 'COOL BLUE'

Ball FloraPlant

I am enamored with the prolific introductions of new interspecific salvia that offer so many attributes including diverse colors, heat and drought tolerance, durability, dark foliage and attractiveness for bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

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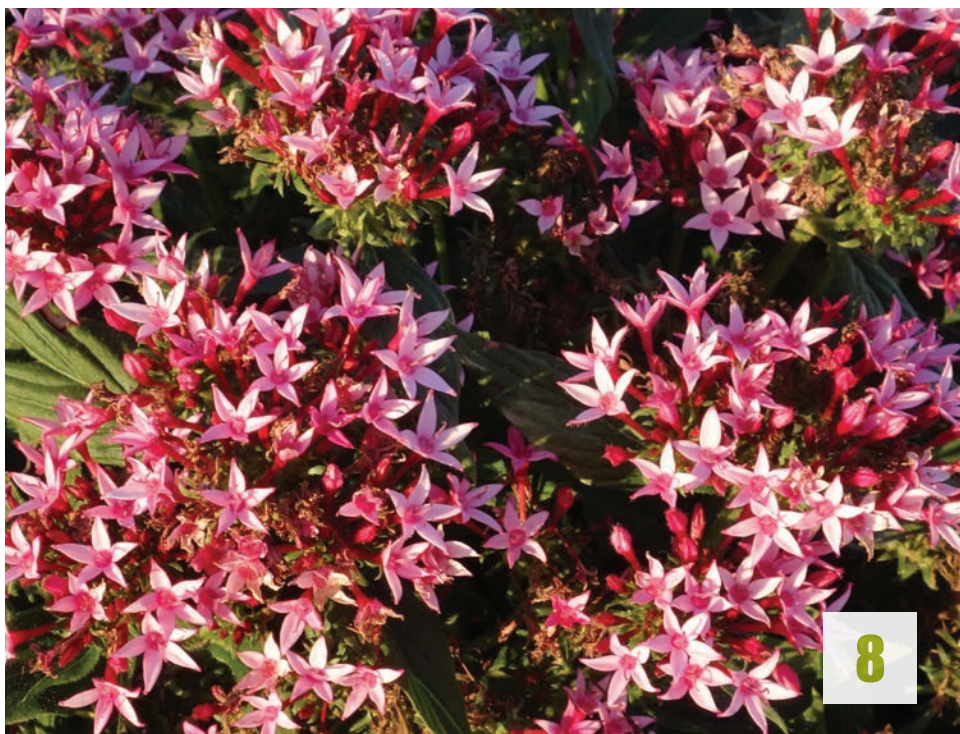


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Salvia 'Cool Blue' was one the first plants that caught my eye as I entered the Costa trial. The free-flowering, light blue, multiple inflorescences rose stately above the foliage in the trial bed. This longispicata x farinacea variety inherits the large inflorescences of the longispicata species and the excellent branching which is characteristic of the farinacea species. If you grow Mystic Spires, you will appreciate the value of this new introduction. It is vigorous and well-branched, and has dark foliage with striking bicolor flowers. The Ball FloraPlant salvia portfolio is wide-ranging, with multiple interspecific and guaranítica varieties for multiple production applications.

8. PENTAS 'STARCLUSTER CASCADE PINK BICOLOR'

Syngenta

We are familiar with the vegetative Starcluster series that provides vigor, a large star-shaped floral inflorescence, heat tolerance, and an upright habit with application in mixed containers and landscape beds. Now the series has been augmented with the new pentas Starcluster Cascade series for baskets, which will replace the pentas Falling Star series. This new series has larger flowers, increased vigor for a faster finish and a pronounced spreading and mounded habit. There are four colors available: Blush, Red, White, and Pink Bicolor, which was my favorite in the trial with well-defined and striking bicolor petals. This series will withstand the summer environmental pressures and will flower and perform through early fall.

9. VINCA 'BLOCKBUSTER BLUE'

Syngenta

When we think of Syngenta vinca, what comes to mind? Cora XDR and Cora Cascade, and for good reason. These highly disease-resistant series provide quality, reliability and

excellent garden performance. The Blockbuster F1 vinca series was acquired by Syngenta from Floranova a few years ago. I have followed the development and trialing of this series since its introduction. It has been tested and trialed throughout the country and has demonstrated excellent branching, vigor, extra large flowers, outstanding form and earliness. There are now 10 colors and two mixes in the series for 2023, and the new addition is 'Blockbuster Blue Improved', which was the most attention-grabbing vinca in the trial. We have a limited number of blue-colored vinca, and this new variety was stunning and impactful in the trial. This variety, with its unique blue tones, will have strong retail appeal. Blue is a versatile color, rare in nature, and it works with other analogous and complementary colors to offer creativity, versatility and adaptability in mixed combinations.

10. VERBENA 'LASCAR ORANGE LAVA'

Selecta One

Selecta One has been busy in verbena breeding. We saw the introduction of the Compact Beats series in 2021, and for 2023 three Lascar varieties will be introduced: Blue+White, Purple+White and Orange Lava. All three varieties were in the field trial at Costa. They demonstrated strong color retention, a prodigious flower canopy and vivacious colors. There are a limited number of orange-colored verbenas in the market, and this new stimulating and vibrant verbena was highly visible in the trial. There are many adjectives to describe the color orange. It is the color of heat and energy, stimulating and vibrant, and it demands attention. Orange Lava was my favorite in the Costa trial, as well as at the CAST trial this year. This is a medium-vigor, mounded and uniform variety, which will make a striking accent in mixed containers. [gpn](https://www.gpn.com)

