

New at the Pack Trials

Two editors, ten days, 21 companies —
What we saw at the 2002 California Pack Trials.

By Brandi D. Thomas and Bridget White

With new sites and more companies exhibiting in 2002, the California Pack Trials keep getting bigger and bigger, and *GPN* has expanded its coverage to reflect this growth. This month and last, we present the Pack Trials from several different perspectives, starting right here with a sampling of the varieties making their debut at this year's event.

Last month, the *GPN* editors picked their favorite new introductions, and Rick Schoellhorn covered begonia baskets, which were everywhere at the trials. Not comfortable with highlighting just 20-25 varieties, this month's articles cover more of the hot new plants that you will want to trial. These articles, by far, do not cover the entirety of the Pack Trials. Make sure that you receive catalogues from all the breeding companies to get a look at the great varieties space excluded from our coverage.

Antirrhinum. 'Palette Purple Rose' (shown) and Purple Eye round out Takii's series of improved dwarf snapdragons. Palettes are early-bloomers with heavy branching and profuse flowering that continues throughout the season. Vigorous and compact with good uniformity, the series is versatile for use in large packs, 4-inch pots, hanging baskets and the garden.

Begonias. Bodger Botanical's new Gum Drop series features extra-large, fully double flowers in a range of six colors: Cherry Blossom (shown), Mandarin, Pink, Red, Rose and White. Perfect as stand-alone or component plants in hanging baskets, Gum Drops flower size means that blooms will not be lost among the foliage.

A seed-produced, double-flowering begonia with consistently uniform blooms, Dæhnfeldt's 'Queen Pink', the most vigorous of the series, produces rose-like flowers that perform well in extreme weather conditions. Queen begonias flower in 11-13 weeks in the pack, remaining

compact, and are ideal for hanging baskets, patio containers and 4- to 6-inch pots

Calibrachoa. Goldsmith Plants' Callie Calibrachoa series features a well-branched, mounding habit ideal for 4-inch pots and hanging baskets. 'Callie Dark Blue' (shown) is one of the deepest blues on the market. Selected for early blooming under short days, Callie's self-cleaning flowers remain open 24 hours per day. Callie grows from 6-8 inches in the garden and trails to 20 inches in hanging baskets. Habit is uniform across the 5-color series.

In recent years, Selecta has been gaining recognition for its MiniFamous Calibrachoa series. This year sees the addition of two new varieties and four varieties improved for color. Featuring vigorous to medium growth over the series, MiniFamous Calis have good heat tolerance and early to very early flowering. The blooms on Peach increase in color intensity closer to the throat before turning to yellow.

Suntory's Million Bells Calibrachoa offer self-cleaning, 1-inch flowers and good disease tolerance. While the habit of both Cosmos Pink and Red is upright, Trailing Red Purple (shown) is more prostrate. Million Bells varieties bloom profusely into fall, with their bell-shaped flowers spilling from baskets and containers.

Chrysanthemums. To be introduced in October, chrysanthemum 'Fabienne' is new to Yoder Brothers' line of pot Fleurette varieties. This is the first bi-color variety of the Fleurettes, with white forming a halo around the daisy eye and bright pink tips. Fabienne has a uniform, rounded habit, full flower coverage and medium-green foliage. It has a 7-week response time and is best grown as a spray.

'Little Rock' from Yoder has large, bright pink-purple flowers that fade into white at the outermost tips for a delicately painted look. Flowers are large and uniformly distributed over the



Takii 'Palette Purple Rose'



Bodger 'Gum Drop Cherry Blossom'



Goldsmith 'Callie Dark Blue'



Suntory 'Million Bells Trailing Red Purple'

variety information



Yoder Chrysanthemum 'Fabienne'



PanAmerican Gazania 'Tiger Mix'



Fischer Geranium 'Black Magic'



Ball FloraPlant 'Fiesta Olé Peppermint'



Oglevee 'Applause Lavender'



Sakata 'Ultima Baron Merlot'

plant, giving it a full, rounded appearance. Little Rock's sturdy, upright, dark green foliage contrasts tastefully with the richly colored blooms. It has a 9-week response time, and is best grown as ZBR (zero bud removal) or spray, but can also grow as a disbud with CBR (center bud removal).

Gazanias. One of the most stunning new varieties we saw, Gazania 'Kiss Mahogany' from Goldsmith Seeds has bronzy pink flowers on a mounded, controlled habit with upright, medium-green foliage. A brownish ring outlined in black circles the yellow eye. Mahogany grows to 8-10 inches in the garden and 4-6 inches in containers.

The unique mix of different-striped colors available in PanAmerican's 'Tiger Mix' Gazania is a real eye-catcher. A drought-resistant plant, Tiger Mix features large blooms, compact growth, short stems, a free-flowering habit and early flowering. The Tiger Mixture contains strong plants, with good landscape performance, that hold their color well.

Geraniums. 'Black Magic' from Fischer capitalizes on the consumer demand for darker flower colors. Not quite as heat-tolerant as other ivies, Black Magic's dark burgundy-purple, semi-double flowers are nonetheless going to be a big seller either as a stand-alone or in combination with whites or pastels.

One of four new additions to Selecta's Sunrise series, Salmon Pink's semi-double flowers have a paler margin that adds depth to the flower head. Dense, zoned foliage is held to a compact habit that mounds nicely under upright florets. Salmon Pink fits nicely with the series, offering slightly early flowering and good heat tolerance.

Impatiens, double. Ball FloraPlant's first variegated double, 'Fiesta Olé Peppermint' features dark pink to white bi-color blooms over silvery green and cream foliage. Its controlled, compact habit is good for 4-inch, late and/or pot-tight production with little or no growth regulators required. Free-flowering, self-branching plants will flower until first frost.

The third bi-color in Oglevee's Cameo series, 'Cameo Scarlet Surprise' has larger-than-average, medium scarlet and white bicolor flowers with a good color range from white to red. Very well-proportioned plants have a good mounding habit and medium-green leaves.

Impatiens, New Guinea. Dark colors like 'Sonic Purple' and very pale colors like 'Sonic Light Lavender' top the offerings at Fischer. Both varieties are early- to mid-season bloomers with dark green foliage. Light Lavender is, however, a little more vigorous with compact to medium growth, as opposed to Purple's compact habit.

Oglevee's new Applause series offers growers a different format for New Guineas: small containers. All five colors — Red, Rose, Lavender (shown), Dark Salmon, Purple, Orange Blaze and Light Lavender — are compact growers perfect for 4-inch- or jumbo pack-production. Features include large flowers, constant blooming and heat tolerance.

Pansies/Violas. Creating a complete color range in their popular Atlas series, Bodger Seeds offers six new colors for the line: Beaconsfield, Blue with Blotch, Purple Smile, Red with Blotch, White with Blotch and Yellow with Blotch. A perfect complement to the other nine colors in the series, the new Atlas colors have large flowers held high over compact, mounding plants.

PanAmerican adds eight new colors to its popular Sorbet F1 viola series, acquired last year with the purchase of Waller Genetics. New varieties, including Coconut Swirl, conform with the series, featuring strong over-wintering performance, heat tolerance, early blooming and intense flowering.

A rich, purplish rose color with white/cream centers, 'Ultima Baron Merlot' (shown) from Sakata has medium-sized, abundant flowers on a compact plant. This series is ideal for spring and fall markets, with early flowering potential. The Ultima Baron series offers new color patterns that will enhance the color opportunities in the landscape and expand the pansy market.

Perennials. Thriving in hot, sunny locations, even under drought conditions, Benary's Echinacea 'Primadonna Deep Rose' is ideal for cut flower or potted plant production. A deeper shade of pink than most Echinaceas, Primadonna Deep Rose holds its color well and ages with the characteristic Echinacea "drooped" petal look. ♦



Benary Echinacea 'Primadonna Deep Rose'



Goldsmith Aquilegia 'Origami Rose & White'



Takii Canna 'Tropical Yellow'



Ball FloraPlant Petunia 'Suncatcher Sapphire'



Sakata Petunia 'Explorer Rose'



S&G Calceolaria 'Pita Petit Yellow'

variety information



Golden State Calla 'Garnet Glow'



Dæhnfeldt Gerbera 'Festival Spider Salmon/Red Shades'



Kieft Gerbera 'Revolution Golden Yellow Shades'



Ball FloraPlant Nemesis 'Aromatica Deep Blue'

We've seen several *Guara lindheimii* come into production recently, but EuroAmerican Propagators' 'Perky Pink' should stand out. Perky Pink features reddish leaves, a compact habit and an airy look perfect for use in combination plantings. Continuous blooms cover this plant through the hottest part of the summer. Best for 4-inch or combination production.

Origami Aquilegias from Goldsmith Seeds offer six great colors, including Rose & White (shown). Growers can schedule them with other bedding plants, and they were bred for first-year flowering. Six-inch containers grow taller, more robust and less leggy than other varieties. Origami is free-flowering with uniform height and timing.

American Takii's Tropical series is an extra dwarf, seed canna that grows to only 24-30 inches in height. 'Tropical Yellow' has vivid, yellow-orange-speckled flowers and upright, dark green foliage. These cannas will flower approximately 85-120 days after sowing in the spring and are naturally branching.

Petunias. Introduced last year, Ball FloraPlant's Suncatcher series adds three new colors: Deep Plum, Sapphire (shown) and Pink Vein. Featuring a vigorous, mounded, trailing habit, these petunias will flower under short days for an early show of large blooms. Well-branched and good for 4-inch production, this single flower series is being re-introduced this year.

Blue, Red and Violet are new to Goldsmith's Storm series. These grandiflora petunias were selected for strong resistance to overhead watering and rain, so they are quick to recover after inclement weather and resist *Botrytis*. With strong basal branching and a non-stretching habit, this series stays compact during production and keeps its shape in the garden.

Sakata Seed added five new colors to its Explorer series — Blue, Pink,

Rose (shown), Magenta and Purple. Rose features vibrant, rose-colored flowers on a compact, spreading habit with medium-green foliage. Explorers are early to flower and will continue flowering into fall. Flower size is 2-3 inches, and petals have a shiny, waxy texture that repels water to help them recover quickly after a storm.

Potted Crops. A pure, bright yellow, *Calceolaria Pita Petit 'Yellow'* is a compact and early-blooming variety for both pack and pot production from S&G. Producing large, vibrant, pita-shaped flowers, Pita Petit performs well as a bedding plant, in larger pots and in mixed containers. It also continues to bloom through the cool, fall months — providing a perfect complement to late-season sales of pansies and ornamental cabbage and kale.

With 1 1/2- to 2 1/2-inch blooms, Calla 'Garnet Glow' is hot pink with a slight dark eye and has lighter green, lanceolate foliage. Stems grow to 10-16 inches and plants should be kept cool for best stem length. This variety has a very uniform, upright habit that is best in larger pots. Early flowering, it makes a good cut flower. Garnet Glow is also available in HIPP (High Input Product Availability), a new program Golden State Bulb Growers has created to tailor its product to producers' needs. Among this program's benefits are: the most vigorous, cleanest-possible stock; a more compact plant requiring less Bonzi; an exceptionally high number of breaks with more, yet smaller, flowers; and more plant using a smaller tuber.

Festival 'Spider Salmon/Red Shades' was one of Dæhnfeldt's new additions to this finely petaled gerbera line. Shades of pink, rose and red flowers with a predominantly dark eye sit atop sturdy, medium-green foliage. Plants have an upright habit and share the characteristics of other Festival varieties, ▶

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EuroAmerican Arctotis 'Pumpkin Pie'



Oro Farms Nemesia 'Busy Bee Ice'



*Ecke Angelonia
'Carita Lavender' and Deep Pink*



S&G Laguna Lobelia Trailing Pink

including a 95-percent germination rate, uniform seedlings and a tight flowering window. All Festival varieties feature Pro Coat seed coating.

Goldsmith Seeds' 'Libre White Improved' features a liberating change for growers, retailers and consumers who suffer skin irritation from traditional primula varieties, as it was bred to be primin-free. This variety has large, bright white flowers that sit nicely over an improved, more compact habit. With a crop time of 16-20 weeks, Libre can be used for both early- and late-season sales. Recommended for 4- to 6-inch pots, color bowls and window boxes. Libre is available in nine other colors and a mixture.

With a minimum of three flowers to each plant, Revolution 'Golden Yellow Shades' gerbera offers a showy mix of yellow to light orange flowers on a compact habit. Kieft Seed's Revolution series offers early-flowering plants that bloom uniformly across the series and can be sold within two weeks from the start of flowering. Also available in Pastel Orange/Dark Center, Scarlet-Red/Dark Center, Yellow/Dark Center, Red Shades/Dark Center, Pastel Pink Shades/Dark Center and Rose Shades.

Vegetative annuals/Component plants. If fragrance is a dying plant characteristic, no one has told Ball FloraPlant because this year saw five new introductions to their Nemesia Aromatica series. With fragrances ranging from lilac to vanilla, Aromaticas have a compact, well-branched habit and excellent heat tolerance. Approaching day-length neutral, plants will continue flowering past frost, making a great fall crop. New colors include Dark Lavender, Deep Blue (shown), Lavender, Light Pink and White.

Like many of EuroAmerican Propagator's offerings, Arctotis may not be a familiar genera to many growers. Previous forms were sparse-bloomers with wild growth. 'Pumpkin Pie' (shown) and 'Sun Spots' have a more compact habit and profuse blooms held above silver-green leaves. Uses range from 4-inch to mixed container to hanging basket production.

According to Oro Farms, Nemesia 'Busy Bee Ice' is the first nemesia to feature variegated foliage. Dainty, light pink/lavender flowers with a sweet scent adorn this upright plant that makes an excellent component plant for mixed containers. Busy Bee Ice is heat- and cold-tolerant and

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Suntory Torenia
'Summer Wave Amethyst'



Proven Winners 'Superbena Purple'

very floriferous. It should be planted in January-March for spring sales and requires one pinch after planting and no PGRs.

In the iceplant family, Oro Farms' 'Pig Face Pink' is a *Carpobrotus* with small, dark pink, daisy-like flowers and medium-green, fine, succulent foliage. Cuttings should be planted in January-March for spring sales; it requires just one pinch and PGRs are not necessary. This variety will take full sun in all locations and is not frost-hardy. Growers should consider marketing it not only for its novelty, but also its drought tolerance.

A great bird attractor that will add interest to any garden, PanAmerican's ornamental millet 'Purple Majesty' features purple foliage, stems and flowers; large cattail-like flower plumes; and good PGR response. Suitable for 4-inch to 1-gallon production, plants remain green under greenhouse conditions but will color outdoors in full sun.

There were several new *Angelonias* released the year, including Proven Winner's *Angelface* series and Paul Ecke Ranch's *Carita* series. Starting with three colors, Blue, Blue Bicolor and Violet, *Angelface* will make a good addition to late-season schedules. Best for 6-inch or larger containers, *Angelface* is

responsive to PGRs and heat- and sunshine-tolerant *Carita* offers four colors: White, Purple, Lavender (shown) and Deep Pink (shown). Vigorous, well-branching plants have an upright habit that adds height to mixed containers. Perfect for a variety of pot sizes, from 4-inch to 10-inch.

S&G Flower's Laguna *Lobelia* series features compact, well-branched plants that are suitable for packs, small pots and containers. Extremely floriferous, Trailing Pink has softly hued pink flowers with fine, medium-green foliage, a trailing habit and good heat tolerance. Laguna's 1/2-inch blooms provide full coverage for a blanket of color.

Suntory's *Torenia* 'Summer Wave Amethyst' is being reintroduced for 2002. Intensely floriferous, self-cleaning and self-branching, Amethyst produces small, purple/white bicolor flowers with a tiny wishbone shape at the center created by their stamens. It has a nicely mounded, trailing habit and light green foliage. Summer Wave tolerates both dry soil and heat, and blooms from April-October in shady beds and hanging baskets.

Verbenas. Proven Winners' new Superbena *Verbena pedula* lives up to its name, featuring extra-large flowers and a very vigorous habit. Perfect for larger containers, the seven Superbena colors — Blue Purple, Burgundy, Coral Red, Dark Blue, Large Lilac Blue, Pink Shades and Purple (shown) — are mildew-resistant despite their large leaves. This series will eventually replace the Tamari series. GPN

Brandi D. Thomas is associate editor and Bridget White is editor of GPN.



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