



Miles of TRIALS

THE NEWEST CULTIVARS WILL BE ON DISPLAY AT THE CALIFORNIA SPRING TRIALS. BY JAMIE J. GOOCH

EACH SPRING SINCE 1965, plant breeders and marketers have put their latest cultivars on display for a week in California. The event has grown steadily, and this year more than 40 companies will give visitors a preview of what will be available in 2010 and beyond. Though originally geared toward growers, the trials now are attended by representatives from many corners of the Green Industry, including landscapers, garden centers and big box retailers.

The dates that were originally set for the 2010 trials were pushed back from March 20-26 to April 10-17 at this year's OFA Short Course. The later dates will give breeders more time to deliver their best plant materials. Plants will be on display at dozens of open houses along the central and southern coasts of California.

The opportunities for landscapers who attend the California Spring Trials are many. Formerly known as the Pack Trials because

the displays focused on greenhouse "packs" of flowers, the trials now include plant performance information for each step of the distribution chain, including landscape installation. The event is the largest flower exhibition in the horticultural industry, so landscapers can get a first-hand look at the new color that will be available to them.

Design ideas will be easy to come by because the open houses have large displays and landscape demonstrations that feature various color and height combinations. Attendees can also learn what goes into breeding cultivars for color, hardiness and disease resistance — and have the opportunity to speak directly with plant breeders.

The state of the art in flower production is a constantly moving target. Each year, new cultivars are released that perform better than the old standbys. Knowing what those new cultivars are and how they perform in your area is a competitive advantage landscapers can use to gain and retain customers.

For the most up-to-date information, and to make appointments with the participating companies, visit the National Garden Bureau's Spring Pack Trial page at www.ngb.org/spring_trials. 🌱

The California Spring Trials will be bursting with color and ideas for landscape bed designs.

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Clearly bigger alyssum

The Clear Crystal series from **Ball Landscape** offers big flowers and a bigger plant size for better heat tolerance than standard alyssum. Get ready for outdoor shows in shades of lavender, purple and white. The flower is especially harmonious with pansies. The tetraploid construction of the series delivers more vigor than standard diploid varieties, according to the company. BallLandscape.com

Award-winning marigold

As a 2010 All-America Selections winner, Marigold F1 African Moonsong Deep Orange from **Syngenta Flowers** offers fade-resistant, double-bloom flowers that range from 2.5 to 3.5 in. in diameter. The stress-resistant plants flower in about 70 to 84 days, and grow to 15 in. tall. Over the summer, the old blooms will be covered with green foliage — which keeps the plants looking fresh throughout the growing season. GoldsmithSeeds.com




Hot shades of Winter Jewels

New for 2010 from **Terra Nova**, Helleborus Winter Jewels Peppermint Ice has large, double picotees that are light pink with a rim of dark pink edging. This clumping perennial is most active in late winter to early spring, and requires dappled shade (full sun in the Northwest). It's equally at home in mixed beds, cottage garden layouts or as understory. Other new shades this year in the Winter Jewels series include Amber Gem, Berry Swirl, Cotton Candy, Harlequin Gem, Jade Tiger, Onyx Odyssey, Sparkling Diamond and Painted Doubles. TerraNovaNurseries.com


Summer shot of color

Proven Winner's Lil Miss Sunshine bluebeard is a cross between Petit Bleu and Sunshine Blue. It delivers shiny yellow foliage all summer long, and features a compact habit. Abundant blue flowers appear in late summer on this deer-resistant, butterfly-attracting shrub. With a height of 30 to 36 in., it can be used as an addition to a mixed border or perennial bed. ProvenWinners.com




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