



Spring trials

PREVIEW

Blushing Pink is one of three new SuperCal introductions from Sakata.

WHEN GLENN Goldsmith opened his greenhouse to show off his new varieties to customers in 1967, he could not have predicted it would start the ball rolling on what would become the California Spring Trials.

This year's trials will take place March 24-29 at 17 locations that include nearly 40 companies showing off the plants that will be available next year. Visitors who pre-register can make their way from Gilroy, CA (where the Goldsmith family began the trials and officially retired last year), all the way to Encinitas, CA, more than 400 miles to the south. Along the way, they can participate in roundtables, hear from expert speakers, learn from product demonstrations and, of course, see some amazing displays of new varieties.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE PLANT INDUSTRY'S MAIN EVENT.

BY JAMIE J. GOOCH

What's new

For example, Syngenta Flowers, Inc., which purchased Goldsmith Seeds in 2008, will highlight its flowers, Syngenta Crop Protection products and Fafard soil mixes.

"We have a lot of new seed varieties being introduced this year, including seven all-new series," says Tracey Gorrell from Syngenta Flowers' Marketing Com-

munications department. "In our vegetative assortment, we're proud to launch three new colors in the market-leading Calliope geranium series as well as some unique novelty colors in our award-winning Lanai verbena series among our introductions for the 2012-2013 season."

Also in the northern region of the trials, Sakata will display new colors of its SunPatiens hybrid impatiens, three new SuperCal introductions, which combine petunia and calibrachoa traits, and new plant series at its Salinas, CA, trial location.

"We're coming out with Magic Carpet Yellow Mecardonia," says Jeanine Standard from Sakata's Media Relations department. "It has an upright habit, but is low to the ground so it's good for paths

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Cosmic Orange is a new color in Ball FloraPlant's Patchwork series of impatiens.

or pavers.” The plant, which can be walked on, has petite upright blooms that come up from its foliage.

“Another thing I’ll be sharing is that we have a new Sundance portulaca series,” she says. “It has an upright habit and large flowers that stay open longer during the early evening. It’s extremely heat tolerant. There are six colors in that.”

In the seed area, Sakata is introducing the first “clear” Majestic Giants II pansy. The solid yellow pansy will not be mottled like other Majestic Giants II pansies. The company will also display a new line of snapdragons with five colors, as well as a new dianthus series.

Stops in the northern region also include displays from Danziger ‘Dan’ Flower Farm at Headstart Nursery’s stop; Pacific Plug & Liner, which includes the Israeli suppliers of Cohen, Hishtil, Jaldety, Isaacson Flowers and Schwartz Nursery; Golden State Bulb Growers; American Takii; and Speedling, Inc., which is hosting ABZ Seeds, Greenex USA, Inc., Hem Genetics, Plant Source International, Inc., Schoneveld Breeding, and Thompson & Morgan.

Ball gets artsy

In the central region, Ball Horticultural Co.’s stop in Santa Paula, CA, will feature

all of its breeding companies, as well as its retail brands and Daniels Plant Food. The company’s theme this year is “The Art of Plants.”

Ball will show off more than 295 new seed and vegetative varieties, as well as 18 new series.

Some of those new introductions include the Cool Wave pansy, which trails up to 30 in.; a new Everlast Garden Dianthus from Selecta North America, which is a Zone 4, cold-hardy plant that won’t die in heat; and three new colors of Patchwork Cosmic Orange Impatiens — Cosmic Orange, Burgundy and Pink Ice.

Ball will also display the new Pretty series of petunia. These seed-grown petunias have a better branching habit with improved airflow for less disease, according to the company.

Visitors to the PanAmerican Seed display can check out Angelonia Serenita, a new Serenita that is a more compact and controlled version of the company’s Serenita angelonia. It has high deer and rabbit

PHOTOS COURTESY: BALL HORTICULTURE (TOP); SYNGENTA FLOWERS (OPPOSITE LEFT); AND DARWIN PERENNIALS



Lavender is one of the new colors in Syngenta Flowers' Calliope geranium series.

Darwin Perennials' Double Scoop Cranberry Echinacea.



tolerance, as well as low-water needs, according to the company. PanAmerican will also feature Spring Matrix pansies.

Darwin Perennials is expanding its Sombrero series of Echinacea with a new Lemon Yellow color and the company's Double Scoop series of double coneflowers now includes a Cranberry color.

Beyond Ball's partners and brands, the central region includes Dümmer USA, Inc., which is showcasing the HGTV Home plant collection; Greenheart

Farms; Floranova; Skagit Gardens; Fides Oro, Inc. with Flamingo Holland; and GroLink Plant Co. with Westhoff, Athena Brazil, Florist Holland B.V., GroLink, GreenFuse Botanicals, Hort Couture and PlantHaven displays.

Trend spotting

The southern region includes stops at Proven Winners; Paul Ecke Ranch; and Plug Connection, which includes displays from Suntory Flowers, Benary, Cultivaris

and America In Bloom.

The trials have grown over the years to include more than just a show and tell of plant materials. Whether traveling to all of the regions, or focusing on a specific area, the Spring Trials provide a great opportunity for landscape professionals to keep on top of the latest trends in color, marketing, and design. **LMM**

Gooch is a freelance writer and editor based in Northeast Ohio.



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