

Floriculture New Crop Update – Report from California Pack Trials 2003

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Pack trials displayed in California, 2003, highlighting new introduction in Pansies and Violas. The pack trials are the floriculture industry's week long celebration of all the new cultivars released on the market for the upcoming year.

Pack trials is an industry event held in early April each year highlighting the new releases in flowering crops for each year. This is an industry event and, generally, not open to the public. Most of the exhibiting companies are not familiar names to the average consumer because by the time the plant is sold at a retail nursery it is tagged by the nursery that produces it, not by the breeder company that created or released the plant. For that reason consumers should use the name of the plant when looking to buy plants listed here, while nurseries should contact their distributors and use the company name to get the correct source.

Floranova had a great seed release that I couldn't help but stop at. It was *Nicotiana* 'Tinkerbelle' and it is a large hybrid. Rose tinted petal with a green outer covering on 3-4 foot plants with a widely branched flower habit. This is one for the back of the perennial bed, but it is really striking.



Nicotiana 'Tinkerbelle,' provides a very different look than traditional *Nicotiana*. The crop is much larger in stature and would make a good spring specialty gallon product as well as in mixtures.

At Ball FloraPlant I was glad to see the introduction of Whisper White to their Whisper Diascia line. We just finished our winter trials of Diascia, and some of the Whisper series were among our top selections. The Whisper Diascia are some of the most vigorous selections on the market and have a big blowsy habit which makes them perfect for hanging basket production, as well as landscape use.



Ball FloraPlant's new Whisper White Diascia is a new color in the vigorous Whisper series.

Pink Angelonia has apparently been very difficult to keep good stock for so I was glad to see that it hadn't totally disappeared from the market. The Caritas pink is a bit smaller in stature than some of the other series on the market, but if you are looking for Pink it may be the only game in town anymore.



The Libre Series of Primrose offer Florida growers a great alternative winter crop with a high dollar return. The plants are cold tolerant and long flowering. *Primula obconica* can be found from a variety of suppliers and definitely a crop worth looking into for extending your winter season.

Goldsmith Seed also had their line of *Primula obconica* (The Libre Series) out, and I think this group of Primula is really making a comeback. A lot of smaller growers have taken it up as a winter crop and marketing the large flowered hybrids as premium flowering potted plants that have a higher heat tolerance than many other forms of Primula and good cold tolerance for winter plantings in the Sunbelt. The Libre Fuchsia and Deep Blue were both striking and this is a crop that needs more attention especially for growers looking into the early spring and fall extension markets.



Phygellus 'Devil's Tears' has potential for use as a replacement for Fuchsia in Florida. The plant exhibits good heat tolerance and much less disease sensitivity than Fuchsia but looks similar and has potential for new colors.

One of the best stops is all this year was at Pacific Plug and Liner (PPL). PPL had great displays, some good production trials, and a lot of weird plants to make it more interesting. The crop that I was really glad to see in their lineup was Phygellus. Phygellus hybrids have been popular in England for a long time but are beginning to leak out into the American market and they have tons of potential. Think of them as a combination between a foxglove and a Fuchsia, they are somewhat rangy (but respond well to PGRs) deep green foliage, and terminal spikes of trumpet shaped flowers with yellow throats and a

variety of colors. These plants are strong perennial performers in the northwest and southern US, they also have a good specialty annual market in the central and northern US. We are looking into this crop at the University of Florida as a potential Fuchsia replacement for those of us unlucky enough to live in locations where Fuchsia does not thrive. Pacific Plug and Liner had two cultivars from Carmel on display 'Yellow Trumpet' and 'Devil's Tears' a deep red hybrid with a more open flower form. But be on the lookout for other strong Phygelius as well. 'Sensation' and 'New Sensation' are both deep rich purple violet tones, 'Trewidden Pink' is a rich pink with yellow throat, and there are numerous others scattered through the fringe market as well.



The Corsage series of Verbena from Cohen Propagators boasts double florets and good growth habit. The plant is available as rooted or unrooted cuttings.

Among the other cool plants at Pacific Plug and Liner was the Corsage Series of Double Verbena, yeah... Double Verbena, pretty neat! From Cohen Propagation Nurseries, these two colors Peach & Red were really a great change in Verbena. Each flower head had from semi-double to double florets and while the difference was not apparent from a distance it made for a great novelty once you were close to the plants. Production requirements are the same as for any Verbena and this would make a great addition to a novelty line for any retailer.

Resources

Pacific plug and Liner: www.ppandl.com
Goldsmith Seed: www.goldsmithseeds.com

Ball FloraPlant: www.ballfloraplant.com
Floranova: www.floranova.co.uk
Environmental Horticulture Department, University of Florida: <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu>
Statewide Trialing Website: http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/floriculture/statewide_plant.htm

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