

Five Plants to Watch from the Costa Farms Trial Garden

Each December, the Costa Farms R&D team plants more than 500 varieties in row beds in the company's Trial Garden in Miami, Florida. These plants are unveiled at Season Premier — the annual open house in January. This provides many people a first viewing before the plants are officially unveiled at California Spring Trials.

Even though the Trial Garden is in its prime now, you can start to tell which varieties will go the distance. Here are five that have caught my eye, both from a performance standpoint and because of their appeal to home gardeners.

BEGONIA 'EVI CARMEN'

Begonia 'Evi Carmen', from Beekenkamp, is thriving in containers under shade. This plant shows off a good number of richly colored flowers. The blooms offer a nice contrast to the clean, dark green foliage. It has good branching and consistency, making for a cluster of good-looking plants. It's nice to see

another good-performing option for shade. I've found shade is one of those challenging areas a lot of home gardeners give up on because they think the only way they can enjoy flowers is in the sun. These homeowners are sure to love the rose-shaped, intensely colored flowers — both on the bench and for the rest of the season when they bring it home. 'Evi Carmen' is a stylish way they can dress up containers on their decks, patios, balconies or window boxes.

GERBERA 'GARVINEA SWEET SPICE'

The Garvinea series, from Florist, frequently hits the list of top performers in the Trial Garden — both in spring and summer trials. It was no surprise to walk through the Trial Garden and see this one as an early standout. Sweet Spice offers a mound of clean mid-green foliage topped by attractive lavender-pink flowers. These blooms appear nonstop throughout the season. It laughs off summer heat and resists disease. Gerbera daisy is a plant consumers are sure to gravitate to on store shelves, as well — the daisy-shaped flowers are charming, attract butterflies and other pollinators, and hold up well when cut for bouquets. It thrives in the landscape, as well as containers, so it's versatile enough for every consumer with a sunny spot.

COLEUS 'GREAT FALLS SUTHERLAND'

Coleus 'Great Falls Sutherland', from Dümme Orange, is the best-performing variety in its series in the Trial Garden. It has good consistency and branching, creating a dense, trailing plant with bold foliage — and no sign of disease. It should appeal to home gardeners who know and love how reliable coleus always is, and want a trailing plant for hanging baskets and container gardens. 'Great Falls Sutherland' also brings versatility to the



Begonia 'Evi Carmen'



Coleus 'Great Falls Sutherland'



Petunia 'Supertunia Picasso in Purple'



Gerbera 'Garvinea Sweet Spice'



Impatiens 'SunPatians Compact Fire Red'

table, so homeowners can grow it in sun and shade, even if they don't feel like they have a green thumb. It's an eye-catcher by itself filling a pot or landscape bed, and phenomenal mixed with colorful flowers or other foliage plants.

PETUNIA 'SUPERTUNIA PICASSO IN PURPLE'

There's no shortage of petunias in the Trial Garden this year. Petunia 'Supertunia Picasso in Purple' from Proven Winners is noticeably better than most of the rest of the crowd. One of the only petunias in the Trial Garden that doesn't suffer from Botrytis, it also features a great habit and consistency. The blooms are strongly colored and recover quickly after watering. The bicolor blooms have a fun pattern that appeals to home gardeners looking for something different. The dense branching of 'Supertunia Picasso in Purple' makes it shine in pots, planters and sunny baskets.

IMPATIENS 'SUNPATIENS COMPACT FIRE RED'

Like the Garvinea gerberas, SunPatians (from Sakata) reliably reappear on our top performers reports every year. The best of the group, at least so far in the trials, is Compact Fire Red. It offers outstanding uniformity and consistency along with clean, deep green foliage. Free of any pest or disease issues, it looks great in its row bed. Consumers will love the rich, deep red color, and how well the blooms hold their color (compared to many other darkly shaded SunPatians). SunPatians has built enough brand equity with home gardeners that they're sure to be comfortable purchasing this beauty. [gpn](#)



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