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Great New Plants!

Jenny Andrews sneaks a peek at the new plants featured at the Ohio Florists Association show

By: *Jenny Andrews*



On a recent trip to the [Ohio Florists Association](#) tradeshow in Columbus, Ohio, I got a sneak peek at the amazing plants growers have been busily, patiently creating, some new to garden centers this year, and some not yet released. Below are just a few of my top picks — so be watching for them!

+ zoom

- Browsing through the [Ball Horticultural](#) display my appreciation for petunias was reborn. I literally gasped when I saw the black-as-night *Petunia* 'Black Velvet' (perfect name) and its stunning companion, the black-and-chartreuse-striped 'Phantom' (pictured). Put either or both of these in a container for some jaw-dropping drama.
- Also in the Ball booth was *Begonia* 'Gryphon', from [PanAmerican Seed](#). This one I know up close and personal since I was given a sample plant a few months ago and it's looking quite spectacular on my front porch, with its handsome dome of big silvery leaves.
- I was glad to see my friend Ty Strode, co-owner of [Agri-Starts](#), and almost as happy to see the company's new line of Thai caladiums. I've been intrigued by these plants for a couple of years, but have had few opportunities to get a firsthand look. Their unusual colors (very un-caladium-like) and thick leaves make them seem like glittering jewels. In the booth that day: *Caladium* 'Dark Chocolate', 'Cerise' and 'Yellow Blossom'.
- At [ItSaul Plants](#), my cool-plant alert kicked in when I saw *Brassica oleracea* 'Kaleidoscope', a frilly

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The Falls at Reed's Island, Big Island, Hawaii

lavender-edged ornamental kale that everyone was asking about. It might take awhile to get on the market, but it will be worth the wait. And I predict their new weeping Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum* 'Ryusen', will become one of those plants that gives gardeners bragging rights — "Have you seen my new 'Ryusen'?"

- The one plant I carefully coddled on the plane back home (no small feat since the flight was delayed and the plant and I had to get off and on the plane several times) was *Eucomis* 'Leia', graciously shared by the rep for [White's Nursery & Greenhouse](#). I've grown the larger pineapple lilies like *Eucomis comosa* 'Sparkling Burgundy', but 'Leia' is a cutie, with 6-inch spikes of mauve-lavender flowers and a tight tuft of bright green leaves.
- The showstopper at the [Benary](#) booth was *Zinnia elegans* 'Queen Red Lime', a tall zinnia with close-packed domes of petals in shades of chartreuse and rose. Old-fashioned and modern at the same time.
- [Syngenta](#)'s display was awash in vibrant color, but the plant I really want to try for myself is a flossflower called *Ageratum* 'Patina Delft', a bicolor with a soft froth of blue covering its little white button flowers.
- I've always loved Brazilian verbena, with its tall stems of purple flowers nodding in the breeze. Its penchant for reseeding itself into front-and-center spots in the garden could put in the way, even though it's often called see-through verbena. But in the Aris booth I was excited to see a dwarf form called *Verbena bonariensis* 'Lollipop' that is 2 feet tall or less.
- I've had great luck with a *Kalanchoe* I've affectionately come to know as flapjacks. Its seafoam-green paddles edged in red are like sculpture. But the coloring of *Kalanchoe thyrsiflora* 'Fantastic', seen in the display of [Hawaiian Sunshine Nursery](#), takes it up a notch, with lots more red, plus a few hints of creamy yellow. I can't wait to get my hands on this one — even if I have to go to Hawaii!

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Lee James — Floral Design



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