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Hottest Plant Varieties from the 2021 Michigan Plant Trials

MSU and five cooperating young plant growers in the Michigan Garden Plant Tour trialed varieties last summer and chose their best-of-the-best and visitor favorites from the 2021 trials.



Photo 1. Michigan Garden Plant Tour featured six locations that trialed new plant material during the summer of 2021. Photo Credit: Heidi Lindberg.

The [Michigan Garden Plant Tour](#) is a coordinated open house of leading young plant producers and Michigan State University. The Tour educates professional growers and industry professionals about plant selections and their garden performance. During 2021, the young plant producers who trialed varieties for the Michigan Garden Plant Tour were: Mast Young Plants, Pell Greenhouses, Walter's Gardens, Raker-Roberta's, and Four Star Greenhouses (Photo 1). Each of the young plant producers developed a short list of the most impressive cultivars in their 2021 trials and produced videos showcasing some of those varieties. In this article, you can click the links to view the videos about each of the trial garden locations and see which varieties were the best of the trial season.

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Mast Young Plants

The trial garden at Mast Young Plants included 1,500+ varieties with 135 of them being new for 2021-2022 (Photo 2). In the 2021 gardens, there were over 500 custom-designed hanging baskets and patio pot combinations and 20 raised beds. The most notable varieties from the 2021 trials were:

- Helianthus ‘Sol Seeker’ - Danziger
- Crespedia Golf™ Beauty Improved - Danziger
- Petunia Itsy™ White - Syngenta
- Supercal® Pechoa Sunset Orange - Sakata
- Petunia Blanket® Silver Surprise - Greenfuse (Photo 3)

To learn more, check out their [trial garden website](#). Growers can view their best-of-the-best video from Mast Young Plants [here](#).



Photo 2. The trial garden at Mast Young plants included 1,500+ varieties and included 135 varieties that were new for 2021-2022. Photo Credit: Mast Young Plants.

Pell Greenhouses

Pell Greenhouses featured many varieties that they sell as young plants in their 2021 trial garden, including the full product line from GreenFuse Botanicals. The most notable varieties from the 2021 trials were:

- Rudbeckia ‘Rising Sun Chestnut Gold’ - GreenFuse Botanicals INC.
- Rex Begonia Bewitched™ Red-Black - Greenfuse Botanicals INC.
- Rex Begonia Bewitched™ Pink - Greenfuse Botanicals INC.
- Rex Begonia Shadow King® ‘Cherry Mint’ - Greenfuse Botanicals INC.



Photo 3. Brian Weesies, the General Manager of Mast Young Plants, with Petunia Blanket® Silver Surprise in 2021. Photo Credit: Photo from video from Mast Young Plants.



Photo 4. Petunia Crazytunia® 'Mayan Sunset' from Westhoff was one of the featured varieties chosen by Pell Greenhouses. Photo Credit: Mast Young Plants.

- Verbena Durabella™ 'Perfectly Purple'™ - Danziger
- Verbena Durabella™ 'April in Paris™' - Danziger
- Petunia Crazytunia® 'Cosmic Pink' - Westhoff
- Petunia Crazytunia® 'Mayan Sunset' - Westhoff (Photo 4)
- Petunia Crazytunia® 'Black Mamba' - Westhoff, Proven Winners
- Osteospermum Ostica® 'Amethyst' - Danziger

Growers can view a short video about these varieties selected by Pell Greenhouses [here](#).

[Walter's Gardens](#)

The Display Gardens at Walter's Gardens showcases the landscape performance of the Proven Winners® Perennial collection, including Hosta, Daylilies, and Hardy Hibiscus.

The top 11 plants from the 2021 trial garden at Walters Gardens included:

- Prairie Winds® 'Lemon Squeeze'
- Allium 'Serendipity'
- Daylily Rainbow Rhythm® 'Sound of My Heart'
- Origanum 'Drops of Jupiter'
- Salvia 'Pink Profusion'
- Sedum Rock 'N Low™ 'Yellow Brick Road'
- Sedum Rock 'N Low™ 'Back in Black'
- Phlox Luminary™ 'Backlight'
- Phlox Luminary™ 'Ultraviolet'
- Amsonia 'String Theory'
- Hibiscus Summerific® 'Edge of Night'

Growers can view a video from Evan Elenbaas, the Regional Product Director, from Walters Gardens [here](#) (Photo 5).



Photo 5. Phlox Luminary™ 'Ultraviolet' was a featured variety from the 2021 plant trials at Walters Gardens. Photo Credit: Photo from Video from Walters Gardens.

Raker-Roberta's Young Plants

The trial garden at Raker-Roberta's Young Plants consists of more than 7 acres with 100,000 unique plants. The most notable varieties from the 2021 trials were:

- Begonia l'conia Scentiment Costa Del Sol - Dummen Orange (Best overall performance annual) (Photo 6)
- Artemisia Gmelinii Sunfern - Darwin Perennials (Best overall performance perennial)
- Bracteantha Granvia Gold - Suntory Flowers
- Petunia Hells - Westoff
- Lantana Heartland Series - Dummen Orange
- Coleus Spitfire - Ball Floraplant
- Cleome Sparkler 2.0 - Syngenta Flowers (Best heat tolerant annual)

You can find more information at the [Raker-Roberta's Trial Garden website](#) (Photo 7). Under the [trial data tab](#), you can see photos and overall performance scores of the top 50 varieties from various genera and breeders over the last four years.

Growers can view a video from Greg Michalak and Kristi Challender with Raker-Roberta's Young Plants [here](#).



Photo 7. The trials at Raker-Roberta's Young Plants included row trials, containers, and hanging baskets. Photo Credit: Photo from video from Raker-Roberta's Young Plants.

Four Star Greenhouses

The trial garden at Four Star Greenhouses showed off their 2022 varieties and a large display combination in Aquapot containers. The most noteworthy varieties from the 2021 trials were:

- Petunia, Supertunia Vista® Jazzberry™
- Sunflower, Suncredible® Saturn™ (Photo 8)
- Lantana, Luscious® Citron™
- Supertunia® Priscilla®
- Salvia, Unplugged® Pink
- Coleus, ColorBlaze® El Brighto

View the video showing the best of the display gardens [here](#).



Photo 6. The Begonia l'conia series received attention from multiple trial sites including Raker-Roberta's Young Plants. Photo Credit: Heidi Lindberg



Photo 8. Suncredible® Saturn™ sunflowers were a top performer at the Four Star trial gardens in 2021. Photo Credit: Four Star Greenhouses.

MSU Trial Gardens

Michigan State University Trial Gardens trialed 300 plant varieties including annuals, perennials, and vegetables in their 2-acre trial gardens in 2021. The trial gardens at MSU are unique in that they simulate a more 'typical' garden experience - whereby they provide the level of plant care and maintenance that a typical gardener would provide (i.e. - only irrigating when needed and fertilizing 2-3 times per season) (Photo 9). The top varieties in their 2021 trials were:

- Angelonia Angelface® Cascade Blue - Proven Winners
- Angelonia Angelface® Cascade White - Proven Winners
- Begonia Viking Explorer Red on Green - Sakata
- Calibrachoa Bloomtastic Rose Quartz, Chili Pepper, Yellow - Dummen Orange
- Calibrachoa MiniFamous® Neo Hawaii - Selecta One
- Calibrachoa Rainbow Flamingo Flair - Dummen Orange
- Calibrachoa Rainbow Pink Pepperberry - Dummen Orange
- Calibrachoa Superbells® Double Amber - Proven Winners
- Lantana Shamrock - Ball FloraPlant
- Coleus, ColorBlaze® El Brighto
- Coleus, Stained Glassworks Velvet - Dummen Orange
- Heliotrope Jamesbrittenia Safari Series - Proven Winners
- Marigold Endurance Series - Syngenta (Interspecific hybrid)
- Marigold White Swan - AmeriSeed



Photo 9. The trials at Michigan State University trial gardens are in a landscaped beds and containers. Photo: MSU Horticulture.



Photo 10. Coleus COLORBLAZE® El Brighto was a top performer at the 2021 MSU Trial Gardens. Photo Credit: [Garden Crossings Garden Center](#).

- Impatiens Spectra Series - Syngenta (Interspecific hybrid)
- Petunia ColorRush Merlot Star Improved - BallFloraPlant
- Petunia Dekko Sorbet - Syngenta
- Petunia Sanguna Mango Punch - Syngenta
- Salvia, Unplugged® Pink
- Salvia l'Conia Hummingbird Falls - Dummen Orange

- Torenia Hi-Lite Mix - Syngenta
- Zinnia Profusion Red Yellow Bicolor - Sakata (Photo 11)
- Begonia l'conia Costa del Sol - Dummen Orange

Edibles:

- Basil Everleaf Thai Towers - PanAmerican Seed
- Pepper Pot-a-peño - PanAmerican Seed
- Pepper Candy Cane Chocolate Cherry - PanAmerican Seed (Photo 12)

Perennials:

- Heuchera Dressed Up Evening Gown - Walter's Gardens
- Heuchera Little Cuties Shimmer - Terra Nova
- Brunnera Queen of Hearts - Walter's Gardens (Photo 13)
- Agastache Kudos Red - Terra Nova
- Echinacea Kismet Intense Orange - Terra Nova
- Echinacea Sunny Days Ruby - Terra Nova
- Origanum Drops of Jupiter

For more information, check out the MSU [2021 Trial Booklet](#).

Growers should also check out the video from the MSU 2021 trials [here](#).



Photo 11. Zinnia Profusion Red Yellow bicolor was a top pick at the MSU trial gardens and was a 2021 All American Selections Winner. Photo credit: [All American Selections](#).



Photo 12. Ripening colors of the Pepper 'Candy Cane Chocolate Cherry' Photo: [GPN Magazine](#).



Photo 13. Silver foliage of Brunnera Queen of Hearts. Photo credit: [Proven Winners](#).

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