

The Bailey Nursery Approach to Sourcing, Evaluating and Introducing New Plants[®]

Natalia Hamill

Bailey Nurseries Inc.

1325 Bailey Rd. St. Paul, Minnesota 55119, USA

Email: natalia.hamill@baileynursery.com

Bailey Nurseries <https://www.baileynurseries.com/> currently owns three consumer brands:

Endless Summer[®] hydrangeas, First Editions[®] shrubs and trees, and Easy Elegance[®] roses.

Successful brand management involves a number of components including brand strategy, positioning, revenue goals, market intelligence, product development, trialing, intellectual property protection, “go to” market strategy, licensing, production, pricing, sales and product life cycle management.

This talk focuses on Bailey Nurseries approach to product development. In today’s competitive brand market place - new products are essential to keeping a brand fresh and to maintaining attention with licensees as well as retail buyers.

We use a breeding and plant finding matrix to guide our product development team. This matrix consists of 50 genera with specific breeding goals (**Fig. 1**). These breeding goals are guided by market intelligence gathered by Bailey staff as we meet with growers, retailers, merchants, landscapers, consumers and others in the US, Canada and Europe.

Bailey Nurseries purchased Plant Introductions, Inc. (PII) <http://www.plantintroductions.com/>, which is a plant breeding company founded by Dr. Michael Dirr, Mark Griffith (Griffith

Propagation) and Jeff Beasley (Transplant Nursery, Watkinsville, Georgia). We have renamed that company Bailey Innovations, which is managed by David Roberts (**Fig. 2**). David and two other full time breeders use the breeding matrix to guide and prioritize their work. While *Hydrangea macrophylla* is the number one priority - many other important crops including *Distylium*, *Lagerstroemia* and *Vitex* receive a great deal of attention. We also work with other breeders around the world to source genetics.

Using *Hydrangea macrophylla* as an example of our approach to new plants, the breeding matrix includes several categories. Examples include an improved Endless Summer[®], purple leaf varieties, compact varieties, double flower varieties, picotee varieties, etc.

Once a variety with potential is selected, we put it through multiple trials in multiple locations - including Georgia, Minnesota, Illinois and Oregon (**Fig. 3**). Cold hardiness trials are conducted in Minnesota (USDA Zone 4). Cutback trials occur at our facilities in Georgia, Minnesota, Illinois and Oregon to prove remontancy. We also do bluing studies and trials for bud and bloom crop potential in Minnesota and Oregon.

If a potential variety performs well - we then show it to many of our licensed growers in the US, Canada and Europe to get their input. If the feedback is positive, we send samples to them for trial and evaluation.

Because Endless Summer[®] is such an important brand for Bailey Nurseries, the brand management and product development teams hold a meeting with our production, propagation, sales and marketing managers as well as ownership to make the final decision in introducing new varieties.



Figure 1. Bailey Innovations breeders determine best practices for hand pollination in *Hydrangea macrophylla*.



Figure 2. The Bailey Innovations breeding team in Athens, Georgia is led by David Roberts.



Figure 3. Potential new introductions are put through a rigorous production and field trialing process before being introduced to the First Editions® brand.