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WESTERN FLOWER THRIPS DIFFERENTIALLY ATTRACTED TO FOUR VERBENA CULTIVARS WITH SIMILAR GENETIC BACKGROUND

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Western flower thrips, *Frankliniella occidentalis* (Pergande), significantly impact floricultural crops worldwide. Insecticides to control this pest are limited due to federal regulations and acquired resistance to many insecticides. Holistic integrated pest management (IPM) programs are emerging within the industry to manage western flower thrips (WFT) that minimize worker exposure and limit environmental impacts. However, the use of trap crops, which function by using a pest's preference for certain plants to localize the pest for insecticide applications or where they will have minimal impact on main crops, is not extensively utilized in commercial greenhouses due to perceived economic obstacles. Four verbena, *Verbena x hybrida* Voss., cultivars were monitored in ten greenhouses for six weeks to determine WFT preferences. Yellow sticky cards placed immediately above flowers were used to determine if endemic WFT were differentially attracted to verbena cultivars. Western flower thrips preferred the cultivar 'Tapien Lavender' to three other verbena cultivars from the same breeding series and the controls. 'Tapien Lavender' attracted up to 7.78 times more thrips than the control. Verbena cultivars could be a useful tool in IPM programs either as a trap crop for WFT or as a means of enhancing scouting efficiency by luring WFT into specific regions for easier detection.