

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Benary Buys Bodger's Seed Lines

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Benary, the sixth-generation flower breeding company from Hann Munden, Germany, has purchased the rights to a dozen seed annual varieties from fifth-generation breeder Bodger Seeds of El Monte, California. The list includes ageratum, alyssum, calendula, delphinium, impatiens, lobelia, marigold, pansy, petunia, portulaca and viola. It does NOT include any other seed lines, include snapdragons, vinca, zinnia or sweet peas, nor does it include any vegetative products. Benary will take over all breeding, production and sales of the acquired lines.

GrowerTalks spoke with Benary's Matthias Redlefsen from his office in Germany for the details.

"We have not bought Bodger," Matthias emphasized. "We have come to an agreement to only take over those [seed] products that perfectly match what we are doing."

The deal came about, Matthias says, because the two companies have had close ties for generations and have had very good communication over the years. Benary has recently completed succession plans (Matthias' wife is a sixth-generation Benary), while Bodger has no successors in the family. "So it was always clear that some stage sooner or later there would be a question mark to that," Matthias says. "So we've kept the dialogue open about that." Discussions began in earnest last fall, he says.

Why these dozen genera? And why not others?

"We've picked the crops that ideally match our assortment," Matthias replied. "That's petunias, marigolds, ageratum, portulaca ... blank spots in our assortment right now."

As for the crops they didn't choose to purchase? Sweet peas are more for packets—"And if you look at the seed size, you need storage rooms to handle that crop. If you look at a begonia seed, you could probably fit 100,000 of them next to one sweet pea." Matthias says. Also, Benary already has zinnia, vinca and snapdragon. "A merger of two crop lines wouldn't make sense."

We asked Matthias if he was tempted to get Benary into the vegetative market by buying Bodger Botanicals. "Yes and no," he answered. "You know, the gold rush is over in vegetative material. Price pressures are coming in. We've decided to enter the vegetative market, but only with our own genetics. We are good at breeding. You need to find your focus, and our focus is on breeding."

Speaking of breeding, Matthias says they plan to hire Bodger's breeding and production staff and put them on the Benary payroll—"Of course, that depends on whether they want to do so, obviously, but that's our intention." He adds that they'll be renting Bodger's breeding and trialing facilities in Lompoc, California.

And as for the industry's first view of Bodger varieties by Benary? They'll display some of them at the Week 24 Flower Trials in Holland June 9-12.

GrowerTalks tried to reach Bodger for their view of the deal and what their plans are for the other seed varieties as well as Bodger Botanicals, but they were unable to get back to me by press time.