

GROWERTALKS

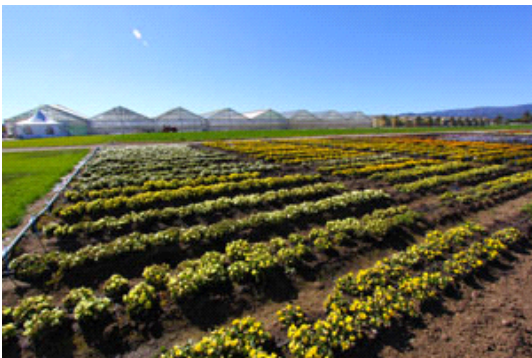
GT in Brief

4/25/2013

The World's Newest Breeding Station

Chris Beytes

At least we think it is: This is the new North American headquarters for German flower seed breeder Benary, which they moved into in January 2012 after just six months of construction. It was debuted to the industry during the 2013 California Spring Trials—hence the outdoor pansy trial in the foreground.



Located in Watsonville, California, about an hour and a half south of San Francisco, the new Benary facility was formerly a location of El Modeno Gardens (which was bought out by Color Spot in 2009). Benary choose the 90-acre site for its favorable climate, and because the greenhouse structure was sound enough that the rebuild could actually be called a renovation, for ease of permitting. That's what enabled them to purchase in 2011 and move in just a year later.

Doug Holden, Benary's head of breeding, helped with site selection and design, which included small breeding compartments, germination chambers, plenty of fresh concrete, shade curtains, benches, underbench heating, fan-and-pad cooling and positive pressure pest management. The result is about 60,000 sq. ft. of state-of-the-art breeding facility, plus another 40,000 sq. ft. of greenhouse space available. Total investment? About \$5 million. So far, 25 full-time staff have been hired.

Why such a big investment? Several reasons, says Managing Director Matthias Redlefsen. First, 30% of Benary's business is in North America. Second, they're currently breeding and testing only in the climates of Germany and The Netherlands, so California adds a sun and heat component to their work. In fact, California will be dedicated in large part to heat-loving annuals and perennials.

Second, "I'm absolutely excited about this industry," says Matthias, and this investment makes that tangible. As does his decision to move his family to California in 2015 for at least a two-year stay. "We want to be close to the music," he says of the North American market in his always-colorful way. **GT**