

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

9/1/2018

“Field Day at Ball’s”

Jennifer Zurko & Chris Beytes



From well above their heads, we get a glimpse of the attendees of Ball Seed’s Customer Day & Landscape Day as they explore the Gardens at Ball to see how the newest varieties have fared so far during the Chicagoland summer.

Ball Seed has had trial gardens on this property since 1933. The first official “Field Day at Ball’s” (as it was called then) wasn’t held until 1953. But even before that, growers, retailers, landscapers and others were encouraged to visit and walk among the rows of flowers to make note of what they might want to offer their

customers next spring. This year marks the 85th anniversary of The Gardens at Ball and the 65th anniversary of Customer Day, and it's like Mother Nature knew the importance of the occasion, since she made sure the weather for this edition of Customer Day was as close to perfect as possible.

More than 1,100 professional growers, retailers and landscapers came to West Chicago, Illinois, on July 27 to see new annual introductions (pictured here) from Ball FloraPlant, Selecta One and PanAmerican Seed, new perennials from Darwin, woody shrubs from Star Roses and Plants, third-party varieties from Ball Ingenuity, and veggies from Burpee.

"Ball Seed was excited to see many new faces and next-generation leaders of companies attending for the first time, as well as customers who have been attending for decades," said Bill Calkins, Ball Seed's Product Marketing Manager. The blue skies and beautiful weather paired perfectly with optimism for the coming season, said Bill. "Having an opportunity to view one of the premier summer field trials in North America is a true benefit to hort professionals. The entire team at Ball looks forward to this day of fun interactions with so many wonderful customers."

It's not all pretty beds and colorful baskets—the Ball Gardens also feature an annual sun container trial (this year featuring calibrachoa), a small trial area for varieties up for All-America Selections awards, and rows of true comparison trials so you can see for yourself how certain crops—like calibrachoa, begonias, impatiens and coleus—stand up against each other. There were also seminars on marketing, business planning and combo design, along with tours of the Ball Premier Lab and Seed Distribution. Plus, a free lunch, sponsored by Ball Seed's WebTrack business management system, which included a drawing for two free iPads for customers using the WebTrack To Go mobile app to upload images and favorites.

If you've never been to Ball Seed's Customer Day, you can catch highlights from the day by watching our video on *GrowerTalks*' YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/growertalks.

Or plan to come next year and be part of Ball's history. It's always held on the last Friday of July (so, July 26, 2019). You can combine it with a weekend in Downtown Chicago ... which always makes for an excellent summer weekend getaway. **GT**