Day 5 of Spring Trials—Already!

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Danziger

Day 5 … but things have not slowed down!

Chris: Ellen! Have you noticed the crowds? We're nearing the end of the Trials, but boy, the people! A group of, I think, 92 landscapers at one stop. And I hear there are still a couple of busloads of broker reps that we might run into tomorrow. And the mood is great! Plenty of good varieties and ideas to bring back home.

Ellen: Hey, I hadn't heard about those buses! We'll have to be sure to jump in the lunch line first, then. I have my priorities, you know.

Chris: Ditto! Speaking of which, props to Proven Winners for a fabulous tri-tip sandwich AND an excellent veggie sandwich.

Ellen: Yes, I heartily approve of today's lunch. Gave us sustenance to see all those annual, perennial and shrub varieties. And boy, were there a bunch—not just there, but at all three of the day's stops. How shall we go about breaking it all down, Chris? Got a plan?

Chris: How about favorites? We've got 10 content areas to fill—how about we alternate with our "Pick Items" from each trial, starting with Syngenta, today's first stop.

Works for me!

Ellen: Excellent idea, Chris! I'll start. Let's see … my pick item from Syngenta would be their new interspecific geranium series, Moxie! (yes, the "!" is part of the name). Consider it a compact version of their very-popular Calliope series; same look, coloration and garden performance, just naturally smaller. Oh, and the Deep Red is just as deep a red as the Deep Red in Calliope. Six colors.

And since I mentioned Moxie!, I need to mention an even smaller interspecific hybrid called Pretty Little Pink Splash. The flower stalks are much smaller, hovering the umbels just above the foliage. Both Pretty Little and Moxie! are vegetative varieties.

Chris, did you know that Ted Williams' dog was named Moxie?

Chris: Ted who? Kidding! I may not be the level of fan that you and Jen are, but I know the conductor of the Boston Pops!

Not a Sports Fan, Apparently

Ellen: That was John Williams, Chris. So anyway, what's your pick from Syngenta?

Chris: No question, it's Tophat Interspecific Begonia, which goes along with their Topspin series of fibrous seed begonias. Only it's bigger. Much bigger! Tophat compares to Big and Megawatt, only the flowers are 20% larger, they say. Like a fibrous begonia for giants. The series gets three colors: Scarlet, Pink and White—also, the White is the first white in the giant interspecific begonia class. Tophat is green-leafed; maybe they'll introduce a bronze-leaf series to go with it.

Ellen: Not only are the flowers big, the leaves are giant, too! But hey, onto my next pick, Cabrio Calibrachoa, another vegetative variety. Cabrio is a compact variety compared to Callie, their more vigorous calibrachoa series. The goal here is to make production easier for growers: genetically compact plants, 10-hour photoperiod and early production. Use in quarts, combos and10-in. baskets. Six colors.

Chris: How about a new compact snapdragon series? Snaptini is its name (below) and it joins Snaptastic, their intermediate series. Snaptini has strong central leaders and plenty of side buds. Includes six colors and a mix.

They also formally showed the new Delta Speedy Pansy and Deltini Viola (below) that I've written about in *Acres Online* having seen them at the Costa trials in Florida in January (these are best for southern growers doing winter production).

Want to see these and more from Syngenta? Check out our video HERE.

One more thing …

Chris: One more thing to mention from Syngenta: A partnership they've got with Chrysal, the flower preservative company (at least that's how I think of them). Chrysal has an ethylene-blocking product called Alesco, which Syngenta has tested and found to be fantastic at preventing flower loss due to ethylene. You spray it on a few days before shipping and get two weeks or more of protection from flower dropping. Works on lots of crops, like seed geraniums, petunias and lobelia. We asked about cost for application: $85 per acre of plants … or about a penny a plant. Cheap insurance! HERE it is on Bobblehead video.

Treated (left) and untreated petunias.

Next stop

Ellen: How about moving on to Proven Winners, eh, Chris? I'll start. I pick Superbells Doublette Love Swept. This double-flowered calibrachoa kinda/sorta looks like a dianthus, doesn't it, with its compact habit and white flower edge. And when I say compact, I mean it's more compact than even the other new Superbells double introduced this year, Double Chiffon.

Chris: Hence the name “Doublette” indicates a small double, as Proven Winners explained it. While we’re on the topic of Superbells, I’ll call out their new Superbells Holy colors: Holy Smokes and Holy Cow. No, I’m not kidding, those are the names! Love it! I should remind you that Holy is the subseries of Superbells Calibrachoa that feature star patterns with speckles or splatters. Holy Smokes is purple and Holy Cow is pink. We joked about some of the other “Holy” names Proven Winners still have available.

There’s one last Superbells, Cardinal Star. Red, obviously. And with a star pattern.

Ellen: My next pick from Proven Winners is something I wrote about a few weeks ago in *Buzz* and *Tropical Topics*, but now I’ve seen it in real life: It’s the Coral Creations succulent program. Seeing it in person, I get it: It’s colorful (and many succulent programs aren’t), it’s a quick-grow program for the grower (four to five weeks) and it has recipes that not only work together nicely, but also last for months. They start the program with five recipes, in fact: three for 8-in. pots, one for 12-in. pots and one for 16-in. pots. HERE is a video we did highlighting Coral Creations.

Chris: I was just about to give up on seeing any succulents this year, then Proven Winners delivered this good-looking program. Oh, they'll offer them as individual varieties, too, with 3.5-in. branded pots available—for those consumers who want to make their own combos.

Paradise and Diamond

Chris: I'll hit on a couple more annuals before you tackle what I know you want to tackle, Ellen. The Supertunia Vista series is best known for Vista Bubblegum. Now there's a Vista Paradise, which they describe as watermelon pink. Big and vigorous for the landscape and large containers.

Another big variety is in the Euphorbia Diamond family. You know Diamond Frost and Diamond Delight: Now there's a jumbo variety called Diamond Mountain. It's vigorous enough to keep up with the most vigorous blooming annual. Or you can grow it as a monoculture pot or even a landscape plant. Dave Konsoer described it as a "cloud on the ground."

For all these annuals and more, watch our video HERE.

Proven Harvest

Ellen: You know me so well, Chris! I love the veggies. It was a matter of time that Proven Winners introduced some sort of edible line. They're calling it Proven Harvest and they have five varieties over three genera so far. First are the two strawberries with the clever name Berried Treasures Pink and Berried Treasures Red.

The next is the vegetative Amazel Basil: They claim it's downy-mildew resistant, which would help consumers keep basil in their garden much longer. Then there are two tomatoes, Garden Gems (snack-sized semi-determinate) and Garden Treasures (full-size determinate). Both the basil and the tomatoes are out of University of Florida breeding. For the first few items in the Proven Winners' Proven Harvest line, the performance is impressive!

Chris: I wondered if you were going to mention my alma mater. But yes, Proven Winners waited a long time to get into the edibles world and they knew they didn't want to compete in mainstream, bread-and-butter varieties. So they're going for very special varieties. For instance, Garden Gem was bred by Dr. Harry Klee, who's worked for years to breed the perfect tomato: disease-free, but with the best taste possible. It even made the cover of *Science* magazine! Amazing that nobody else picked it up before Proven Winners.

Ellen: When it comes to vegetables, I can't help but be a skeptic. I'll see how these varieties perform in my own garden before saying they're disease resistant and tasty. And my shipping address is …

A Perennial and a Shrub

Chris: True! The proof is in the growing, which is why we always say you can't take our word, or even the breeder's word, for any of this stuff—you have to grow it yourself.

There were plenty of Proven Winners perennials and Color Choice Shrubs … space dictates that we pick one each to highlight here. (Watch our perennial video HERE and our shrub video HERE for much more.) I think I'll go with the Holy Grail of perennial hibiscus breeders: a dark-leafed hibiscus with red flowers. Which Walters Gardens has managed to breed, and so they called it—what else?—Holy Grail. The plant they had wasn't in bloom yet and the foliage wasn't completely dark (although the new growth was), but the photo they showed in the display was impressive. Okay, Ellen, what was your favorite shrub?

Ellen: Well, there were a lot … gosh, what to pick? I think I'll go for a "genus" they admit they made up: pyracomeles, a cross between a pyracanthus and an osteomeles. Called Juke Box, this shiny green-leafed evergreen is something Proven Winners is touting as a boxwood alternative. Zones 7 to 9 or perhaps 6 to 9. Those of you experiencing boxwood blight could use this.

Off to Danziger

Chris: Alas, we must move on from Proven Winners to Danziger, which always holds its trial at Headstart Nursery, directly behind Garlic World (home of garlic ice cream). A good selection of new additions here, but Ellen and I will each pick a favorite. For me, I like that Danziger is doing what several other trials are doing: simplifying their lines. Take their Noa Calibracha, for instance. Lots of varieties and subseries. Very confusing. So they're going to eventually drop Noa as a series and instead upgrade everything and give them their own series name based on habit.

For instance, Lia is their hanging basket series. It features tight internodes and lots of flowers. Daylength is just 10 hours, so it's easy to flower early. Lia starts with four colors.

Also getting a new addition is Calibri, their compact calibrachoa series. It's been tested to produce a good-looking 4-in. pot, but still finish nicely in the garden. Lemon is the new one in this series. Okay, Ellen, your pick from Danziger?

Ellen: I'll pick Sunstrong Bicolor Purple Erysimum. Fans will know we've run into erysimum several years ago, but Danziger's version needs no cooling at all. Grow it like an annual, we were told, put it in gallons or larger, and extend your season on either end. The color is an interesting pale purple and salmon or peach.

That's what we've got for Tuesday's trials. Got anything else, Boss?

Time to Wrap Up

Chris: Anything else? How about the guilt I feel? We see hundreds of introductions, but we can only write about a dozen of them. Which is why I always say, you've got to come to Spring Trials yourself if you really want to know what's going on. Still, if you check out our videos, you can see much more.

Speaking of which, due to a slow Internet connection, we didn't get as many videos posted yesterday as we planned. But we did get them up today. So if you want to see what was new at Takii and Thompson & Morgan, click on their highlighted name and you'll link right to it.

Well, that's it for Day 5! Tomorrow, Wednesday, we wrap up with Pacific Plug & Liner, Benary+ and Suncrest Nursery, home of the former Agrexco companies. Stay tuned!

Ellen: See you tomorrow, everybody!

Chris and Ellen

Chris Beytes
Editor & Publisher
GrowerTalks and Green Profit

Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
Green Profit

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