GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Crazy for CAST

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Christian Westhoff, second-generation owner of German vegetative plant breeder Westhoff (far left), shows the Ball Publishing Bobbleheads (Chris Beytes, Bill Calkins and Jen Zurko) one of their newest Crazytunia varieties, Pink Zebra, at the California Spring Trials this past March.

Westhoff was one of the 28 companies that showed us their new introductions over five days at nine locations. We also covered 644 miles in our fancy Jeep Wagoneer, which allowed us to fit all of our luggage and camera equipment needed for the journey (plus ourselves, of course, and plenty of snacks).

According to the National Garden Bureau, which helps with registration and promotion for CAST, all of the stops reported an increase in attendance. We haven't counted exactly how many new plants we saw, but it was enough to fill three notebooks and lots of hard drive space with photos and videos.

Since we see every stop, one question we always get is: What new introduction stood out? Pink Zebra is certainly one of the many great varieties we saw, but for the last couple of years, it's been more about trends and marketing patterns that have been memorable rather than specific plants.

This year, we saw the trend in sunflower breeding continue, along with really interesting flower patterns and colors. There's been more cross-breeding amongst species, as we saw new additions of petchoa (a cross between petunia and calibrachoa) along with a new series. Plus, upgrades and breakthroughs in the perennials space.

If you didn't get a chance to attend CAST, you can go to the *GrowerTalks* YouTube channel to check out what's new from the 26 videos we filmed at each stop. We also posted photos to our social media pages on Facebook and Instagram. And you can read our archived Acres of buzz! newsletter.

Mark your calendar for next year's CAST event, which will be back to a Tuesday-Friday schedule, April 6-9, 2027.

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