

Day 2 of Trials: Green Fuse and GroLink

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Day 2, Ellen!

Chris: Day two of six, Ellen! Two stops, a dozen or so companies (not all of which had new stuff for us to cover) and yet we finished early!

Ellen: Don't jinx it, fella. A whole lot could happen between here and pressing the send button.

Chris: Very true! Our life depends upon two working Macs and a seriously fast Internet connection. Thankfully, Mr. Apple and Mr. Marriott are obliging us.

So, dear readers, let us fill you in on our Saturday at Spring Trials. We hit two locations: the Green Fuse location, around the corner from PanAmerican Seed in Santa Paula, and the GroLink location, about 20 minutes west in Oxnard. Green Fuse shared space with two German companies, annual breeder Westhoff and geranium specialist PAC. Over in Oxnard, GroLink had lent its space to a raft of companies, most of whom are listed above. If we didn't mention them, it's not because they didn't have good stuff, it's only because they weren't showing anything new for 2020. And that's what this newsletter is all about.

Ellen: Exactly that. We're all about the new. So, hey, how do you want to approach today's coverage? Chronologically? Alpha order? Birth date? Astrological sign?

Chris: Funny you should say that: We did see a variety named Scorpio yesterday ... But how about we just swap back and forth, listing our personal favorites from the day, without regard to which trial or which order? Ladies first.



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A new rex begonia series

Ellen: Leave the jumping off point to me, why don't ya? Okay, given this opportunity I'll start with a new rex begonia series from Green Fuse called Bewitched. It's a series of cut-leafed rexes (rexi?) that are big and ornamental, AKA quite pretty. They have the same timing as Green Fuse's Dibs, meaning about eight to nine weeks for finishing. Three varieties—White, Wintergreen and Red Black. That's Wintergreen, below:





Chris: Those would make big, beautiful patio plants. Okay, my favorite item of the day is without a doubt the new geranium series called Tall Dark and Handsome from Westhoff. Remember the Pillar geraniums from Oglevee? These are the same idea: geraniums that can grow up to about 3-ft. tall (with the help of a trellis or cage). As the name implies, these are dark-leaved, with a nice zone and four flower colors: Pink, Orange, Hot Pink, Deep Coral. These weren't bred by Westhoff; they're bred by a fellow named Charles Valin in the UK, made available by PlantHaven, picked up by Westhoff and cuttings are produced by Vivero Internacional in Mexico. Ellen, did you follow all that?



For a video of this and more of the Westhoff introductions, click [HERE](#).



A Sweet Treat



Amazing variegation

Ellen: Sounds like they need to keep their passports ready. Okay my next pick is an alstroemeria from Royal Van Zanten called Colorita Katiana. What makes an alstroemeria so special? Variegation! Chris mentioned it looks a bit like a medium-sized hosta with some beautiful, red, non-hosta flowers. I agree! And I thought that it would make a nice centerpiece for a Christmas tablescape. Habit is compact and mounding and it's best in 7- to 8-in. pots.



Chris: RVZ said that variegated alstroemeria was the talk of their trial. Now, it's not the first variegated alstroemeria—they've got one called Fabiana with white flowers—but it's the most stunning, due to the red flowers. Check it out in our Royal Van Zanten video [HERE](#).

As for my next favorite of the day: How about the new Crazytunia colors from Westhoff? This collection offers the wildest colors of any petunia series on the market, I'd say. This year they added five new ones: Lemon Burst, Purple Prince, Purple Storm, Cherries Jubilee and—the winner of the wacky name of the 2019 Spring Trials—Spider Girl.



Oh, as an aside, I asked about the impact of the orange petunia gene ban on their petunias and was told it affected about 18 out of 60 or 70 varieties ... 25% or so. Significant! However, one thing I didn't know was that Canada didn't ban the orange gene, so varieties banned in the U.S. are still available in Canada—look for the Canadian flag in their catalog to know which ones.



Some fancy fillers

Ellen: Spider Girl wins—for the moment! Speaking of Westhoff, I'll mention their new program called Fancifillers. You guessed it—it's all about fillers or "structural plants," as our Westhoff guide Manfred called them. These are our filler plants for containers. And they have a bunch! Such as Lysimachia Sunburst, Indian Mint (Satureja, I believe) and two silver-leaved items—an artemesia called Sea Salt and a didelta called Silver Strand. What's a didelta? An upright-leaved, succulent-looking plant that Jen Zurko just couldn't keep her hands off of.



Chris: If you see a disembodied hand sneak into our videos to touch a flower, that's Zurko. Okay, I'll go back to our first stop, Green Fuse, and write about two new leucanthemum. The first is a first: Double Darling Daisy, the first fully double leucanthemum (below). It's quite compact, but with good pure white fully double flowers. It's a "First Look" variety, meaning only available in small numbers for now. The second leucanthemum, Betsy, features the largest flowers you'll probably ever see on a leucanthemum—upwards of 6-in. across. The plant is a beast, too. Check them out, and more, on our Green Fuse video [HERE](#).



Ellen: I'll wrap up our Green Fuse visit with a new annual salvia series, Fashion, a hybrid of an *S. splendens* and a wild salvia, *S. buchananii*. They say it has a habit like Skyscraper, but a bit more naturally compact. In a word, it's graceful. And pretty! Five lovely colors—Orange, Pink, Cherry, Burgundy and Rose. They called it "a wall of color."



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Good morning, Starshine

Chris: Suntory is about the biggest of the displays at GroLink, so let me pick my favorite from their introductions: Surfinia Purple Starshine. I pick this for two reasons: First, Surfinia is just about the oldest vegetative petunia series in the market, celebrating 30 years! Second, it's a great new star pattern for the series. Granted, the name isn't as fun as Spider Girl, but the plant looks great.



Ellen: My Suntory pick is Grandaisy Dark Pink. The dark flower with the grey-green succulent-like foliage is gorgeous. And it's a big, full plant, too! Or was my favorite the new Senetti White, with its blue-purple center, crisp white petals, and calm and compact habit? Choices, choices ... well, check them out for yourself in our [VIDEO](#) of the Suntory introductions.



Chris: Gerberas, Ellen! I'm going to mention three of the new gerberas from Dutch breeder Florist. They added two new Garvinia gerberas, which are their garden performance types. Classic Femmy (below) has a funny name (actually, it's the nickname of the niece of Florist's marketing manager), but a lovely pink color with 2.5- to 3-in. flowers; and Garvinia Sweet Frosting is a clear white gerbera with slightly smaller flowers (2 to 2.5-in.). White isn't the most common color in gerbera, but it pairs well with everything and so should be popular.



View all the new gerbera from Florist in our [VIDEO](#).



Foliage seed at Spring Trials

Ellen: Plus Florist adds to its list of national park-named Patio gerberas with Pinnacles. Great dark pink colors! Where's Pinnacles National Park? We asked the same question: Right down the road in Paicines, California.

Hey, you know I write a newsletter about tropicals, right? Evanthia, a Dutch seed and young plants company, will get a mention in my next issue. Why? They can sell you seeds of a bunch of different tropical plants—from monstera (did they mention they were sold out?) to Jatropha to a bunch of different asparagus ferns. Need something? They may have it for you or your young plant supplier.



Chris: I do think they may have said they're sold out of monstera seed. Pity. But, hey! Bug them and maybe they'll source some more! Well, Ellen, let me wrap up the day's highlights with one more alstroemeria from Royal Van Zanten, Garden Jewels. These are tall alstroemeria—actually varieties that might almost be good enough for their cut flower program if they weren't just a tad short—that they're now selling as a garden alstroemeria that can be used as a home garden cut flower for those who love to harvest their own fresh flowers. The collection offers four different colors. Alas, they're not hardy (unless you're in a warm climate).



What's on for Sunday?

Chris: That's it, Ellen, Day 2 in the books ... and on video, too, thanks to videographer extraordinaire Jen Zurko. I hear her cackling over there at the desk at another one of our outtakes as we speak.

Ellen: Cackling is a good sign. It means we're entertaining ... well, at least entertaining ourselves. Okay, so tomorrow we're packing up, leaving Ventura and heading to Buellton for Windmill Nursery's seven displaying companies and then Dümme Orange in San Luis Obispo. Wine and flowers, Chris!

Chris: Toss in some barbecue and you're talking nirvana! Stay tuned for the highlights from Day 3 of the California Spring Trials. And remember: Click our names below to weigh in with comments, questions and things we should be looking for. See you tomorrow!

Chris and Ellen

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