

2019 Spring Trials - Last Day!

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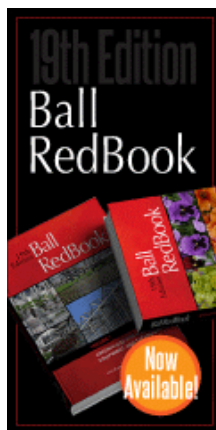
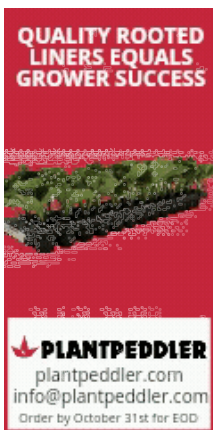
IN THIS EDITION

Pacific Plug & Liner
Terra Nova
Southern Living/Sunset Magazine
Benary/Benary +
Cohen/Hishtil/Jaldety

30 YEARS wave

Join the
Party!





Last "Hey, Ellen!"

Chris: Hey, Ellen! This is the last day we get to inflict a Spring Trials newsletter upon our long-suffering audience.

Ellen: Long suffering? That would be my feet. Got any Epsom salts?

Chris: No, but I've got Pretzel Crisps, Sun Chips, Dove chocolates and wine. (*Editor's note: How else would we get through these late nights of writing?*)

Ellen: Ah. Well, maybe I can find a day spa in San Jose tomorrow while I wait for my redeye. Hey, before we dive into today's stuff, I want to add a correction or addition to something we—or at least I—mentioned yesterday. I said that Proven Winners' new Sunstar pentas was the only vegetative pentas commercially available. Not true! I heard today that another company out there has had one for years.

Chris: The hazard of working fast and on the fly: It's really hard to be perfect. We try. But as we always say, if we screw up a detail about your product, you get twice the publicity when we fix our gaffe!

Ellen: Exactly! Okay, with that behind us ... Chris, wanna kick us off here with something from our first stop?

Chris: Yup, but first, one more video from earlier in the week that Jen Z. has managed to post and that's from Danziger, who we visited on Tuesday. Check it out [HERE](#). Also, stick around to the end of the email, where we will offer an overall opinion of this year's event.



PP&L

Chris: Okay, first stop: Pacific Plug & Liner, perennial specialist, and in our opinion, the most imaginative displays of all the Trials stops, thanks to April Herring-Murray. She created "A Secret Garden" this year because she felt it would be lush and green, and it was. Ellen will be sharing some of April's handiwork in her *buZZ!* newsletters.

Variety-wise, they introduced two nice hellebores, Winter Angel Charmer and Frostkiss Dorothy's Dawn. Charmer (pictured below) is the earliest hellebore on the market, blooming at Christmas time or thereabouts; while Dorothy's Dawn is the latest, blooming sometime in March or even April, depending upon where you are. Both are bred by Dutch hellebore specialist Bart Noordhuis.



Ellen: I'm a fan of perennial euphorbias so was happy to see Miner's Merlot as an intro. It has some of the darkest foliage I've seen on an *E. purpurea* variety with lime-green flowers. Drought and heat tolerant, vigorous and water-wise. Tell us about the last variety PP&L had to offer, Chris.



Chris: Well, if we were shooting a video, I'd say, "Echibeckia, Ellen," and you'd say "Gesundheit, Chris." Echibeckia is an obvious cross of two popular perennials that carry characteristics of both: the look and fast growth of rudbeckia, and the disease-resistance and durability of echinacea. They added two to their collection: Blazing Fire and Sizzling Sunset. They're pretty similar, with Blazing Fire having a more mounded habit than the upright Sizzling Sunset. Both are bred by the aforementioned Bart Noordhuis.



For all the PP&L highlights, we've got a [VIDEO](#) just for you.



**A Sweet
Treat**



Terra Nova, Southern Living and Sunset

Ellen: Terra Nova was also stationed at PP&L, and boy, did their display look nice. I want all those pretty perennials for my new house! I'll definitely have a rock garden and two new items from Terra Nova would fit perfectly: Heuchera Little Cutie Shimmer (pictured) gets no bigger than about 6- to 8-in. tall and 10- to 12-in. wide with a silvery sheen on its leaves. Their new Indigo Frost is the first mini heucherella and had near-chocolate leaves and packs a punch in an 8-in. frame. Tough plant! Want something even tougher? Their new heuchera Northern Exposure. Sure, as a Zone 3 it can handle cold temps, but apparently it breezed through 116F conditions in Sydney, Australia, last year. And it's pretty, too, with a red-veined lime leaf.

We've got even more Terra Nova varieties in our Bobblehead [VIDEO](#).



Chris: Our final stop at PP&L was the magazine plant brands *Sunset* and *Southern Living*. These started out as branded woody ornamentals grown by some select nurseries participating in the program, but has expanded into perennials and even annuals. In fact, Skagit Horticulture is now producing liners of those and making them available to any broker that wants them, which means any grower or grower/retailer can get those genetics. What I like are those that are in both magazine's programs, meaning they perform well in both the dry Mediterranean climate of the west, and the hot and humid Southeast. That's the case of these three intros:

Diamond Spire Gardenia is a columnar gardenia that grown to 3 1/2- to 4-ft. tall; Agapanthus Ever is a collection of early reblooming agapanthus in four colors, including a nice bicolor called Ever Twilight; and Senecio Skyscraper (pictured) is a "blue chalk sticks on steroids," offering fast-growing height for succulent containers. See all these on video [HERE](#).



Okay, Ellen, around a few bends in the road to Benary and lunch! Oh, and more new varieties.



Benary

Ellen: Benary is always a great stop and it's not just because of the food. It's because of the people and how they welcome every visitor with sincere warmth. And that was essentially their message this year—it's about the genetics, sure, but without the people daring to do what they do, then what do they really have? So very true.

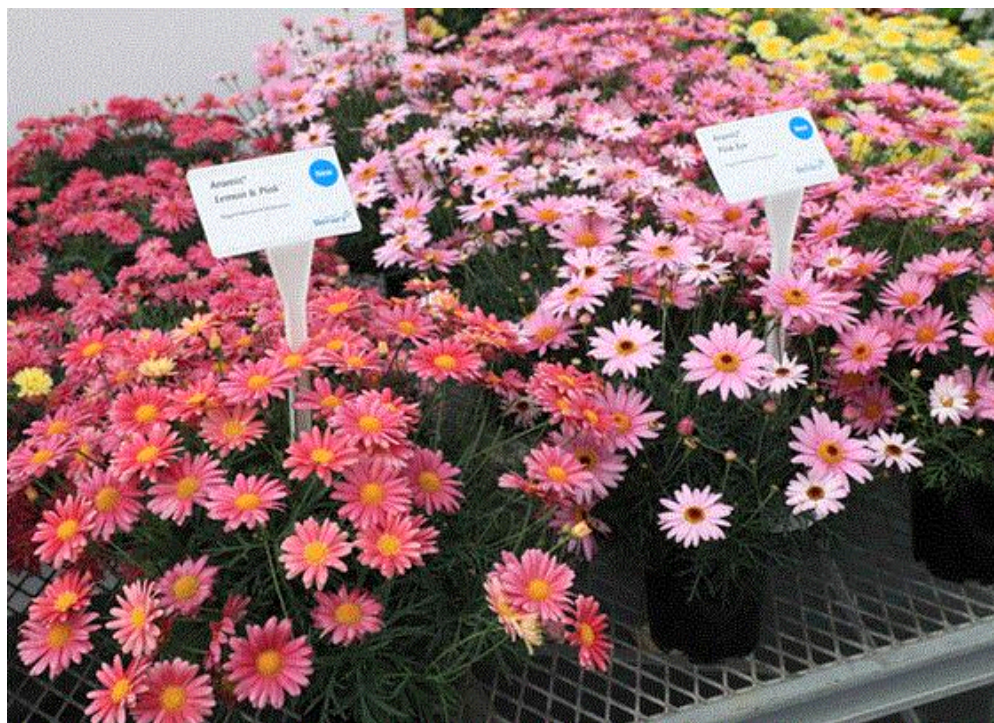
But let's do talk about the genetics, specifically in seed varieties. Benary is synonymous with begonias and they had a whole new series to show us. SuperCool gives us the earliness of Sprint Plus with the performance of the Super Olympias (below). Plus it's literally cool—you can grow it as low as 55F. Available in four colors. They also added colors to existing lines—Light Pink, White, Orange and Scarlet in the Funky Begonia hybrid series and Pink Bronze Leaf in the Big series of *benariensis*-type begonias.



Chris: A couple more seed series to mention: The Graffiti Pentas series gets a complete upgrade for better uniformity in size and timing, and larger flowers. Plus, it gets a new color, Flirty Pink. The upgraded series will go by the name Graffiti 20/20. And along with some pansy and viola color additions, Benary has brought back the whisker pattern from their old Whisker pansy series and put it on a new series that they call Cats. Ellen, did you know that the whisker pattern normally shows up when a pansy is under stress?



Ellen: You'll recall that Benary partnered with the German vegetative company Volmary a couple of years ago, bringing them a broad range of vegetative items and also the power to continue their breeding programs down either the seed or vegetative paths. Basically, they've got a lot of new options and items for you. Like the new items in Taka Tuka Bidens (Red Glow and Red Yellow Center), Sunny Susy Thunbergia (Pink Beauty) and Aramis Argyranthemum (Lemon, Lemon & Pink, and Pink Eye, below).



Chris: The end result of the partnership was also the new company Benary+, the partnership that puts Benary in control of its own distribution in North America. So far, it's been going well, they say.

We cover all of these and more in our Bobblehead [VIDEO](#).



Last stop of the trials

Chris: Okay, across the winding roads of Watsonville to our final stop of the 2019 Spring Trials, Suncrest Nurseries, the home to four Israeli companies: Cohen, Hishtil, Jaldety and Nir. Nir didn't have anything new to show, so we'll focus on the other three, and I'll start with Cohen and their petunia additions. The Happy series, bred by the Israeli company Breier, gets five new colors, including Blue Shade and Pink Shade, which have a nice, soft airbrushed look; and three star-patterned flowers, Rose Star Yellow, Star Pink White and Star Red White (not shown). These are standard pot/garden petunias; for baskets, give a look at Petunia Presto, bred by the famous David Kerley. The eight-color trailing series is already selling in Europe.



Lastly, I have to give a shout-out to the Nemesia Honey series, which, to my eyes, is the most uniform and floriferous of any nemesia. Honey gets three new colors: Dark Purple, Dark Red and Basket Sky Blue.

Ellen: Heading into the bay occupied by Hishtil, you know you'll encounter some herbs you've never seen before. This year, those would be the incredibly sweet *Lippia dulcis* Cascading, the just-like-lemonade *Thymus citriodorus* Cascading Lemonade and a new line of five lavenders from none other than the aforementioned David Kerley. He's everywhere! By the way, drop some of those Cascading Lemonade leaves in boiling water, refrigerate overnight and they say you can't tell it from real lemonade.



Hishtil's wide range of herbs.



And to finish off ...

Chris: The final company of our final email of our coverage of the 2019 California Spring Trials is perennial specialist Jaldety. They gave us three introductions to consider. Senecio Silvery Velvet is a big, fluffy Dusty Miller. It's not one of those giant-leafed senecios that looks almost prehistoric, but it's still impressive, with nice proportions. A tip: it doesn't like any shade. Full sun gives you the best habit. Sedum Silver Roses is a pretty little sedum suited to dangle over the edge of a mixed succulent container. And Delosperma Jewels of Desert is one of those nice little blooming rock garden succulents that you can plant and forget ... until it blooms with all its colorful, iridescent flowers. To see these varieties and more up close, you've got to watch our [VIDEO](#).



That's just about it!

Chris: Well, Boston, we survived another one. Any last thoughts to sum up your view of this year's event? Good? Bad? Indifferent? Fond memories? Best lunch?

Ellen: Well, either we're getting really good at this or it was a slow year. Not sure what else could explain why we finished early and were in bed by 11:00 p.m. each night. Also, what's up with all the salvia? I mean, how do so many companies independently embark on breeding efforts for the same plant?

Chris: This was the year of the salvia, especially the interspecific ones—you know, the big ones that look like a perennial, but might be Zone 8 and most of them have blue and black flowers. And I agree that it was a quiet year. We were expecting Imara XDR and Beacon, the two IDM-resistant impatiens from Syngenta and PanAmerican, respectively. Those are groundbreaking, for sure. But beyond them it was mostly me-too series, color additions and novelties that are interesting, but won't make you a fortune.

Ellen: Best lunch? Benary's seafood crepes and begonia beer. Best name? Superbells Blackcurrent Punch. Best snacks? PP&L had some yummy cookies and excellent cappuccinos. They take the best displays, too. Best colleagues? You guys.

Chris: How kind of you to say! For me, Takii's tri-tip sandwich edged out Benary (even without any alcohol) and the best name prize is a tie between two Westhoff intros: Geranium Tall Dark and Handsome, and CrazyTunia Spider Girl. Snacks? Every place that offered us one. Best memory: The drum-off on the tiny toy drum set at Syngenta and sitting in on the drums with the real, professional jazz quartet at Benary. I was humbled by those guys, but I think I held my own.

Ellen: Held your own? You killed it! Plus the faces you made while drumming—classic! Okay, so are we done? Can we call it a night?

Chris: Done and done! Folks, check out all our videos on YouTube because they show a lot more than we can in these emails. Including our annual [Bobblehead Bloopers](#) video! Jen Zurko cackled constantly as she sorted through our best gaffes. And hit the "subscribe" and "like" buttons. Also, expect more tidbits from our notebooks in our own regular emails, *Acre's Online* and *buZZ!* On behalf of my faithful sidekick Ellen, and videographer extraordinaire Jen Zurko, so long, everybody!

Chris and Ellen

Handwritten signatures of Chris and Ellen in black ink. The signature for Chris is on the left and the signature for Ellen is on the right.

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