

CAST Day Two: Green Fuse & Armstrong Growers - 8 Companies!

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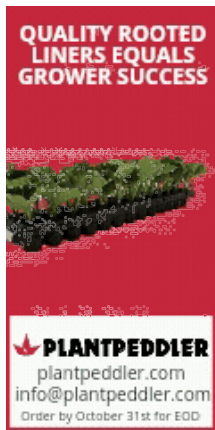
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PlantHaven

30 YEARS wave

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Welcome to Day Two of Acres of buZZ!

Chris: Welcome to the second day of our *Acres of Buzz!* coverage of this year's California Summer Trials—CAST, as it's called. It used to be Spring Trials, but heck, it's June, and they're giving it a try as an early Summer event (the jury is out as to whether or not the 2023 event will be summer or spring).

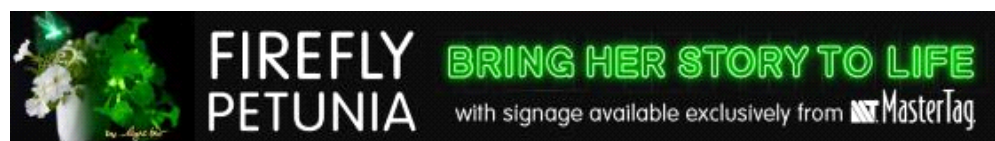
Bill: In case anyone is wondering what *Acres of Buzz!* means, it's the combination of Chris' *Acres Online* and Ellen Wells' *Buzz!* e-newsletters. Only, Ellen is sitting it out this year, and Chris—and you, the reader—are stuck with me.

Chris: Not stuck, Young William—you are lending great cultural and technical information to the mix, courtesy of your job as editor of our new *Tech On Demand* newsletter (which you can subscribe to [HERE](#)).

Bill: Nice of you to say, Boss! And I am truly grateful to be out in Cali looking at new plants in the presence of real people.

Chris: Same here! Okay, about Day Two: We had two stops and seven companies to visit, with a nice variety of annuals and perennials. Bill, why don't we each pick a few of our favorites from each stop, starting with the host of Stop 1, Green Fuse?

Bill: Sounds good to me. Let's rock!



Green Fuse Game changers

Chris: Okay, you've given me the chance to talk about a game changer—quite literally. It's a new interspecific hydrangea called Game Changer. Why Game Changer? For about a dozen reasons, explained Steve Jones. First, it can be grown as a potted plant or landscape plant, and it needs no vernalization to flower—in fact, from a cutting it can be sold in about 12 weeks. It's a lace-cap type, which we know is trendy. You can buy it as an unrooted cutting or a rooted liner. It's got thick leaves and is less prone to wilt compared to potted hydrangeas. And finally, it's said to bloom on new wood AND old wood. Lots of claims! You'll have to give it a try to find out if it performs as promised.



Interspecific Hydrangea Game Changer.

Bill: Yep, that hydrangea is awesome. I really like the new Rex Begonias Green Fuse showed. There were three new, unique patterns that fit well into the more compact Shadow King collection. Lime Ricky has a watermelon-y color scheme, while Rose had more pink tones. And Lemon Love was almost chartreuse, a color I haven't seen much in rex. But my absolute favorite is larger, fitting into the Bewitched group, and aptly named Night Owl. It's darker and we all agreed it looks perfect for Halloween sales. In fact, it sort of looks like a bat.



Night Owl (we think it looks more like a bat).

Chris: A new series Green Fuse showed was Portulaca 24/7. I think it's the first series name consisting of numbers, not letters. But I got what Steve was implying: the flowers stay open a long time. Not 24 hours a day, he admitted, but longer than most. The series starts with White, Yellow, Fuschia, Orange and Red.

And then in petunias, the spreading Blanket series gets an addition called Silver Surprise. What's the surprise? That the flowers are both silvery blue AND rose ... and some flowers are

both. It looks like a two-color mix, but without having to plant two varieties.



Petunia Blanket Silver Surprise.

Lastly, you know we both like unique color names. Petunia Good & Plenty Mustard. You can guess that it's yellow, and a rich yellow, not unlike Bee's Knees. It's the first flower variety to be named for a condiment—we can only hope the red version is ketchup! But all kidding aside, it's pretty. Now, Green Fuse had lots of First Light Perennials to show, but we're leaving those to our perennial expert Paul Pilon to cover in his *Perennial Pulse* newsletter.

In [THIS VIDEO](#), we cover the annuals AND the perennials at Green Fuse.

Okay, Bill, on to Westhoff.



A Sweet Treat



Getting Crazy with Westhoff

Bill: Oooh! I get to talk about Crazytunias! Westhoff has almost 70 of them now and the color range is getting ... well ... crazy. New ones for 2022 include Magenta Storm, Mayan Sunset and Black & White. Mayan Sunset is a beautiful color that will help move the collection into landscape use with a more trailing and spreading habit. And Black & White is white with black veins and patterns within each flower. It's a really cool color.

Westhoff also showed new petunia varieties containing the orange gene—officially called the A1DFR gene—that's been approved by the USDA. Thanks to that, the Hells series returns with three new colors: Hells Ember Red, Hells Heat and Hells Forge, as well as two Crazytunias with the orange gene, Nightwatch and Frisky Orange.



Loads of petunias at Westhoff.

Chris: Equally colorful are Westhoff's Chameleon Calibrachoa—chameleon indicating multi-colored flowers. Best-seller Blueberry Scone gets joined by Blackberry Pie (introduced last year via Zoom) and Avant Garden (a great name!).



Chameleon Avant Garden Calibrachoa.

Bill: A tech tip for those chameleons is that cooler temperatures during production (once roots are established) yield deeper colors.

Chris: There were two more new series: Lobelia Hot+ improves upon the popular Hot series by having a slightly looser, more vigorous habit that makes them “play well with others” in combination planters. The Hot+ series has six colors. And the Angelonia Serafina series has been bred for heavy branching and lots of flowers. It has seven colors.

Lastly, let me mention something consumers have been asking for online: citronella plants. These scented geraniums make up the Aroma collection—six different plants with different citrusy scents, some with flowers, some without. My favorite is Bunny Brunch. No, it doesn't

attract bunnies (I don't think). Actually, believe it or not, the foliage smells like carrots! Okay, Bill, on to Hem.

Here's all of the above, and more, in our Bobblehead [VIDEO](#).



Hem, Beekenkamp & Schoneveld

Bill: Limbo and Mambo from Hem Genetics definitely opened new markets for petunias and Hem continues to add to both lines. Limbo (their grandiflora series) gets a Silver Blue variety this year and both Limbo and Mambo (the multiflora type) add Yellow Lime, which is really bright and showy.

Chris: I really like both Yellow Limes, but especially the grandiflora Limbo. It's definitely a Martha Stewart color.



Limbo Yellow Lime Petunia.

Bill: I was really drawn to the new Red Hill annual salvia they showed. I like the blooms on salvia and red is my favorite color, so that's really no surprise. It'll grow up to 2 ft. in the garden and the stronger flower stems should hold up all summer long.

Last, but not least, is Celosia Arrabona Red, which I've seen before performing like a rock star in The Gardens at Ball in summers past, but it went away about seven years ago (if my memory is correct) due to some seed issues. Now it's back and Hem has the exclusive on the variety. They're relaunching it with the goal of bringing even more colors to market.

Check out these and other Hem varieties in our video [HERE](#).

Chris: Company #4 at the Green Fuse stop was Dutch breeder Beekenkamp, best known for begonias, and right in the center of the entrance to their greenhouse was a new offering called Garden Dreams, with two colors: MacaRose and MacaRouge. (The names are suppose to be

like “macaron,” the French cookie.) These are *tuberous/etiolator* begonias with small foliage and large single flowers with yellow centers sitting just above the leaves. The effect is like an oversized fibrous begonia—it’s very striking! Oh, MacaRouge is a FleuroStar award winner.



MacaRouge Begonia.

Another interesting begonia introduction from Beekenkamp is their BK Collection, bred and selected to perform in the landscape. They’re interspecific hybrids tested outdoors in seven locations until October to ensure durability. They look like pot-type begonias, but perform like bedding plants—in fact, they say to grow them like bedding plants, not like the tuberous begonias you may be used to. New last year was Frivola Magic; new this year is Frivola White.

Bill: Beekenkamp definitely had some cool stuff. Besides the new intros you just mentioned, they also showed off a big selection of dahlias and, like other programs, they’ve done a lot of work positioning each sub-series in their LaBella line by size and profile to help growers build assortments.

For intermediate 6- to 8-in. pots, the LaBella Grande series adds Fun Red White, a bicolor that holds its color and shows no reversion (“Fun” in the name indicates a bicolor dahlia at Beekenkamp). And the LaBella Maggiore series for 8- to 10-in. pots introduces Fun Flame, Fun Pastel and my favorite of the bunch, Fun Chocolate Yellow (with bright blooms standing above dark foliage.)

Chris, you want to cover that celosia you liked so much?

Chris: I was hoping you’d ask because Celosia Kelos Candela is one of the most unusual celosia I’ve seen. It’s tall and very thin, with wispy orange and hot pink plumes. They showed it being used as a thriller to good effect in several large planters.

Click [HERE](#) to watch our Beekenkamp video.



Celosia Kelos Candela. Cool!

Our last stop at our first stop (if you get what I mean) was cyclamen specialist Schoneveld, which also breeds other early spring crops, but seeing how it's summer and warm, they only showed cyclamen. New for 2022 is the Cyclamen Leopardo series, which has mid-size plants, but large-size flowers. The series has six colors. It matches the Elegante series, which has medium plants and medium flowers (and also six colors). You can see both varieties in this [VIDEO](#).

Alrighty, Young William, take us up the road (about ½ a mile) to Armstrong Growers.



Innovations from Suntory

Bill: Our timing was good, or lucky, because when we arrived at the greenhouse, Armstrong's Vice President and a longtime friend of mine, James Russell, was just leaving and we had a few minutes to catch up. It reminded me how fortunate we are to be back on the road. No Zoom meeting can take the place of in-person greenhouse visits. But I digress ...

The stop included three exhibitors: Suntory, PlantHaven and Mexico-based cutting producer Vivero, there to show their offerings (which now include propagating all the Green Fuse genetics). But they're not a breeder, so don't have any exclusives we can feature. So I'll start with Japanese breeder Suntory. We all know their Sun Parasol line of tropical dipladenias. New for this year is Sunbeam, a beautiful yellow-flowered variety. What amazed me was the flower power and number of buds on each plant. And this one requires no pinching to create the nice shape.



Sun Parasol Sunbeam Dipladenia.

Next, we saw their new Brindabella Rose Crimson Knight, which brings the rose collection to seven colors. Its top attributes are very fragrant double flowers and strong disease resistance. And the buds emerge almost black before opening to red, giving it some extra consumer interest.

Chris: My favorite (other than Sun Parasol Sunbeam, which I agree is a stunner) had to be Surfinia XXL Taffy Pink. Everybody knows the Surfinias are excellent petunias; XXL is a jumbo-flowered version of it—a vegetative grandiflora, if you will. And Taffy Pink is just as you picture it. Bubble Gum would have also worked as a name.



Surfinia XXL Taffy Pink Petunia.

Also in Surfinia is purple-flowered Heavenly Cabernet. And Suntory combined two of their heart-patterned petunias, Purple Heart and Heartbeat, into the Sweetheart Mixer.

Watch our Suntory video tour [HERE](#).

Now Bill, how about all those hummingbird attractors at PlantHaven.



PlantHaven Pollinators

Bill: Not only was there a good offering of pollinator plants, there were hummingbirds darting around, irritated at the humans invading their greenhouse full of tasty blooms. Appropriately, they were most interested in last-year's intro, Hummingbird's Lunch, a large, bloom-covered cuphea, and the latest attractor named *Salvia Bodacious Hummingbird Falls*, said to be the first hanging basket salvia. It has the popular black and blue color palette of regular *Salvia guaranitica*, but with a trailing habit.



Salvia Bodacious Hummingbird Falls.

I'll let you cover the dahlias, boss, since I know you liked them a lot.

Chris: Two offerings in dahlias: Electro Pink was a 2020 intro we only saw over Zoom, so it was very nice to see the big, pink blooms in person! New this year is Mystic Wizard, which sports bronze foliage and big single flowers in a rich jewel-toned magenta.



Dahlia Mystic Wizard.

Bill: Since Chris mentioned one of last year's introductions, I'll mention another we didn't see in person until today: Tropical Blizzard Hedera. This is an Algerian ivy—*Hedera canariensis*—with heavily variegated foliage. It takes full sun or shade, so you can use it in the landscape as a groundcover or as a houseplant.

To see all these and more, check out our video [HERE](#).

Day Two In the Books

Chris: As always, that's just a fraction of what we saw today—it's impossible to cover it all, as we'd have to write a novel and you don't have time for that. But check out our videos, above, as they often show more than what we wrote about. Bill, any last thoughts about Day 2 before we sign off?

Bill: My only thought is that we saw a heckuva lot of different plants today. The innovation that breeders are showing is mind-boggling. We've seen traditionally rangy plants bred for compactness and tidy plants bred for more wispy habits. It's pretty clear to me that today's breeders are locked into consumer trends and that bodes well for the new crop of garden shoppers who exhibit much different interests than hobbyists of old. I'm really excited about the future of our industry.

Chris: And I'm excited about Day 3, when we hit Dümme Orange, Sakata and Takii—three powerhouse breeders. As always, drop us a line if you have questions or comments.

Thanks for reading! See you next time,

Chris, Jen & Bill

Handwritten signatures of Chris, Jen, and Bill in black ink.

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