California Spring Trials Day 1: The Ball Companies



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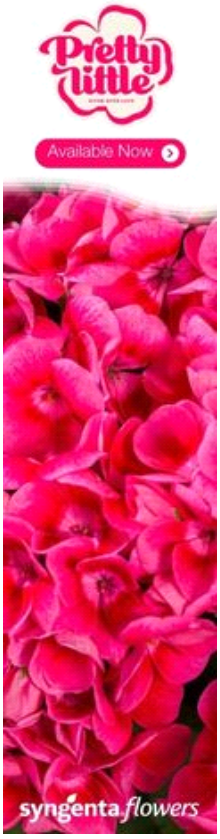
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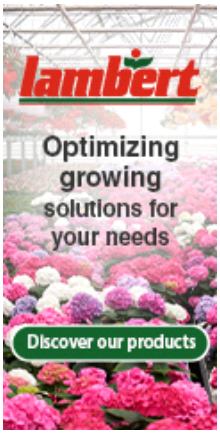
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Acres of buZZ from California Trials

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Welcome!

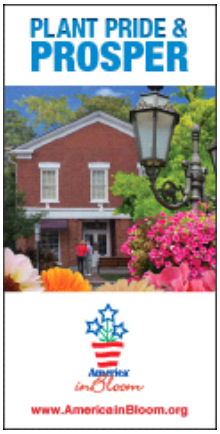
Chris: Greetings, greenhouse and garden center owners, operators, suppliers and enthusiasts! Welcome to the 2023 California Spring Trials *Acres of buZZ!* newsletter! I suspect you all know who we are, but for those newcomers, I'm Chris Beytes, editor of *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* and the newsletter *Acres Online*, and I'm joined by my sidekick and fellow "Bobblehead" (a nickname we picked up way back in 2007, the very first year we wrote this), Bill Calkins, editor of the *Tech on Demand* newsletter. Together, we're bringing you highlights from all the breeder displays up and down the California coast during this busy week of CAST. Today, Day 1, we hit the biggest single stop out here, PanAmerican Seed, in Santa Paula.

Bill: It's always fun to kick off our coverage with a big stop like Ball—complete with a half dozen companies, and myriad growing and marketing messages. I feel like it forces us to get on our game quick.

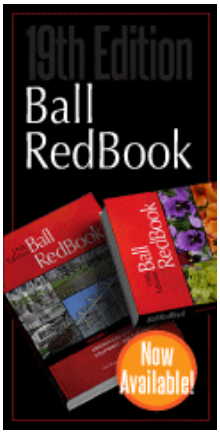
Chris: Fun? I guess you could call it that, Bill. It was certainly tossing ourselves in headfirst for the first day! If you watch our videos (many of which are linked below), you might see that our on-camera skills are a bit rusty. But we'll get better quickly! Oh, and I'll add that we've got a special Bobblehead this year!

Bill: Rusty? I thought we did pretty well. But the viewers will be the judge of that ... it was nice to be joined by another Bobblehead—sort of a rose between two thorns. But let's get started. We have a lot to cover today!











PanAmerican Seed & Kitchen Minis

Chris: Roger that! With six companies to highlight, I'm going to dive right in with PanAmerican Seed, our host for the day, and what I suspect is their key intro of the year Petchoa Caliburst. Petchoa is a hybrid of petunia and calibrachoa that brings the best of both crops—the early season performance and cold-tolerance of petunia, and the colors, patterns and durability of calibrachoa. Most unique of all, Caliburst is from seed—the first of its kind!





Now, it starts with just one color, Yellow, but it looks bright and vivid. And it pairs extremely well with PanAmerican's Easy Wave and E3 Wave Petunias. For plug growers, you'll be happy to hear the pelleted seed has an 85% germination rate. It'll be interesting to see where this new series goes.

Bill: Half of a Petchoa is petunia, so let's head in that direction with some new Waves. A few years ago, the E3 series of Easy Wave was launched, touting early, efficient and "the evolution of Easy Wave" as the attributes. This year, Easy Wave Yellow was moved to the E3 series because it fits that assortment better. They also created a new mix, Sweet Taffy, which includes Yellow, Pink Cosmo and Rose Morn (which is only in the mix, not available yet as a single). Improved in the Easy Wave series is Blue, a core color that is now a whole lot better for growers, being earlier (9.5 vs. 10 to 11 hours of daylength), with much denser flowering.

Chris: Beacon Impatiens is an important series for PanAm, being IDM resistant and helping bring the crop back to gardens around the world. New to Beacon is a good, bright color—Lipstick—one of those hot impatiens colors everybody loves. Beacon also gets another mix, Pearl Island, named for a lighthouse in Nova Scotia. It features a future Beacon color, Blue Pearl.



Bill: This is going to be a bold statement, but Dragon Wing Begonia might be my all-time favorite plant. And it's been cool to see so many more interspecific begonias coming to market over the past decade. The challenge is organizing them into categories based on use and habit. PanAm simplified this for CAST attendees by showing their four types side by side, creating a clear visual of their habits. Each of their four series has something new for 2024. BabyWing adds Red Bronze Leaf. Megawatt upgrades its own Red Bronze Leaf—completely reworked, eliminating the green off-types, darkening the red and deepening the bronze foliage. Dragon Wing (pictured below) gets Pink Bronze Leaf and Red Bronze Leaf. And Hula, their new spreading-habit series, introduced last year, adds a new Red & White mix.



Chris: Pollinators will be pleased with Cuphea Sweet Talk, a heat-loving, large-flowered cuphea in three colors: Red, Lavender Splash and Deep Pink. It's an aggressive grower, so you want to give it about 1 ppm of paclobutrazol right at sowing or within three days, and another light shot two weeks after transplant (rate depends on your geography).

Bill: It's about time we mention food. I mean, we're like 1,000 words in already … let's talk cucumbers.

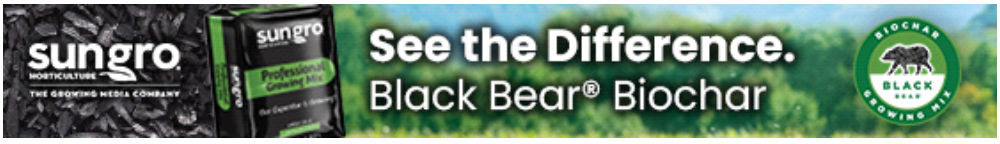
Chris: Are cucumbers food?

Bill: Of course! The PanAmerican Kitchen Minis program is a collection of herbs and veggies that can be grown indoors on a windowsill and harvested to eat fresh from the plant. New for next year is Quick Snack Cucumber, which sets fruit without insect pollination. This little cuke is ready to eat in just four to five weeks from one seed. When you grow it, use a trellis and give it one pinch once it reaches the top of the trellis.



Want to see more? Watch our PanAm video **HERE.**

Chris, where are we off to next?



Ball FloraPlant

Chris: It's not a drive, it's a walk across the greenhouse to … Ball FloraPlant! Where PanAm is all seed breeding, BFP is strictly vegetative—cuttings. Here, I don't think we saw any new full

series, but there were plenty of additions to existing lines. I'll hit a few: Cha Cha Calibrachoa, their larger calibrachoa series, gets a new denim blue called Diva Lavender (below), which features "purple-shifting color." SureShot Petunias, their mounded pot petunias launched last year, gets four new colors: Hot Pink, Pink Vein, Raspberry Cheesecake and Red.



Their SlingShot Petunia collection of novelty colors and patterns for patio pots, gets Burgundy Bliss and Lemonberry. And then there's a new compact cleome called Lavender Dreams that's said to be 30% smaller than the leading vegetative cleome—I suspect it could get a few more colors and hence become a series.

Bill: Those new petunias and calibrachoa are certainly a big deal for BFP and will be added to a lot of programs, but I'm pretty sure the variety that will grab the most attention, visually, is Lantana PassionFruit. The color is unlike anything I've ever seen. It's a trailing hanging basket type loaded with flowers and they say it won't cycle out of flower. Check out the photo and watch for tons more because this is sure to be an Instagram hit.



Chris: As a Floridian who loves lantana, this one is going in my garden—it's a fiesta in a pot! You can see these and much more in our Ball FloraPlant video **HERE**.

Okay, let me wrap up BFP with a segue over to Ball's other vegetative partner, Selecta One, and four different ways you can get combination pots. You know BFP's MixMasters and Selecta's Trixis, both of which are multi-variety/multi-species URC packs or liners. Both collections added some pretty new combinations for 2024. But if you're looking simply for inspiration, both breeders are offering recipes—Dynamix (Selecta) and Fun Fusion (BFP). They're trialed to ensure the varieties in the recipe will play well together, and because they don't have to start together in a liner, they can do some unusual combos, like geraniums and sedums.



Selecta One

Bill: Selecta One is well-known for dianthus, with multiple types for multiple uses. This year, they're launching three new series. The Pashmina series is a true perennial dianthus (Zone 5 hardy) with three colors to start—Berry Red, Magenta and Pink+White.

Another new series is Vivacia, a traditional double-flower type that looks like classic cut flower

carnation. It’s bred for programs with seven core colors. Drop one plant per pot in a 2.5 quart. The third new series launched for 2024 is Capitán, with taller, more robust plants for 8- to 10-in. pots. Capitán have a sweet fragrance, include bicolors and their long stems can be cut for vase use.



Chris: We’ve already talked about PanAmerican’s seed petunia/calibrachoa hybrid petchoa; Selecta One is offering a vegetative version they call EnViva (below). As with the seed version, EnViva combines the best of petunia (cold- and weather-tolerance) and calibrachoa (great colors and good branching). The series starts with four colors: Pink, Red, Blue and White.



Bill: I started with dianthus and I'm going to continue the cool-season crops from Selecta with a unique flower form, commonly called pocketbook plant—calceolaria. The Calynopsis series, bred for daylength neutrality to help growers nail the timing, has been around for a few years, but now some production issues have been worked out, and it's ready to rock and roll with Orange and Red.

Also, a new series of nemesia called Whimsy will be available for 2024 production. The five colors—Red, White, Yellow, Orange Sunset and Deep Rose—are fragrant and prefect for patio pots. Last, but not least, some new Zion Osteospermum for early spring sales. Orange Burst, Pink Orbit and Rose Surprise are three nice, distinct colors for the large-flowered series.

Chris: Lastly from Selecta One, some new petunias that feature their now-famous "sky" pattern of speckles. Headliner Violet Sky looks most like the original Night Sky, featuring dark flowers and slightly creamy spots. While Sweet Sunshine (their name for double flowers) Magenta Sky has the spots on magenta blooms. To see all these and more, check out our video **HERE**!



Okay, Young William, let's talk perennials!



Darwin Perennials

Bill: Works for me! Darwin continues to bring innovations to market and my favorites from their CAST assortment this year don't even have any flowers, believe it or not. Such as a new collection of three silver-foliaged perennials, which includes a culinary sage called Salvia Silver Scent; a small-foliaged, compact lamb's ear called Stachys Little Lamb; and the highlight of the

collection, Centaurea Silver Swirl. Silver Swirl is a bright silvery white and would illuminate the border of any garden at night.



Before I hand it off to you, Chris, I want to mention the new Vivid Dreams Armeria that joins the Dreameria series. These have large, ball-shaped purple flowers and will work in landscapes or patio pots.

Chris: You probably know Darwin's echinaceas, especially their Double Scoop collection, with their showy double flowers. Well, it's getting an upgrade (the collection is 12 years old now, believe it or not!), with the new ones being called Double Scoop Deluxe. It's been improved in habit; it now is more compact, just like Darwin's popular Sombrero Echinacea. The series gets two new colors, Watermelon and Strawberry; Raspberry and Orangeberry carry over from the old series.

Our **VIDEO** from Darwin shows these varieties and more.



Alrighty Bill, you've got a big appetite. How about some Burpee veggies?



Burpee Home Gardens

Bill: My pleasure, boss. The Burpee program is known for veggies and herbs ideal for home gardeners of all skill levels. One way to help ensure success is choosing varieties with strong disease resistance. Pepper Turnpike sweet bell pepper (pictured) is a great example, with built-in resistance from Bacterial Leaf Spot 0-5 and 7-9, Phytphthora and Tobamovirus.



Of course, Burpee also has some new tomatoes—three indeterminate beefsteaks—including Brightstar (with heirloom flavor), Love Red (red, heart-shaped fruit) and Love Sunrise (heart-shaped yellow bicolor). Sun Dipper, which we saw from PanAmerican Seed last year joins Burpee, as well.

Lastly, a pumpkin called Buckskin, bred for its sweetness. It's perfect for pumpkin pie!

Chris: Why didn't they have samples to prove it?

Bill: Amen!



Ball Ingenuity

Chris: Again, a long trip across the greenhouse to Ball Ingenuity, which is products that come from breeders outside of Ball Horticultural Company. Most noteworthy (to me, anyway), was Hydrangea Table Tensia, a compact (8- to 10-in. tall by 12- to 14-in. wide) hydrangea bred for tabletop use. It loves an 8- to 10-in. color bowl or bulb pan. Table Tensia comes in Pink and Blue; the blue requires the usual aluminum treatment to ensure a good color. It's a hearty bloomer, with one plant generating 10 or 12 flowers or more. The flowers antique to pretty shades, giving long life in the home.



Also noteworthy was Tecoma Kalama. I love tropical plants and Tecoma is in the trumpet vine family without the vining habit. Kalama offers three colors—Blood Orange, Papaya and Pomengranate—on compact plants that grow to about 24-in. tall.



Bill: Oh cool! You didn't tackle the begonias, which means they're all mine. Jurassic has been a Ball Ingenuity staple for at least 12 years now and they continue to add to the assortment, which now includes four distinct sizes (from smallest to largest)—Dino, Jurassic Jr., Jurassic and Megalo. Nothing new in Megalo, but the rest have new additions.

Jurassic adds Snowfall, Jurassic Jr. now includes Strawberry Heart and Dino adds Cherry Fields.

And while I like Jurassics, my favorite new Ingenuity begonia is Emerald Ring. This one is a standalone shade-loving variety that spreads and cascades in baskets and can also be used indoors. And it makes great shade combos.

I'm also going to snag the kangaroo paws before handing the laptop back to you, Chris. The new Celebrations series of anigozanthos puts a new spin on the Australian native with some color breakthroughs. The four colors last a long time on plants, which will make nice patio decorations. Check out Masquerade (blue), Fireworks (red/blue), Aussie Spirit (green/yellow) and Carnivale (purple).

Chris: I'm fine with you covering the begonias and anigozanthos because that means I get to talk canna lilies. We all know the Cannova series, but now there's a twist. It's called Rose Dark Bud and it's the beginning of a collection of more compact 18- to 20-in. Cannovas with big, sturdy stems and larger flowers. You can produce it without PGRs, too.

Next to Rose Dark Bud was a Cannova we know, Bronze Peach. Only they're calling it Cannova Casa Bronze Peach—but they're promoting it as an indoor plant for the first 10 weeks or so of its life, then you move it outdoors to the patio—double duty for the homeowner! You can see this and much more in our **VIDEO** from Ball Ingenuity—including Bill's nearly disastrous visit to the desert!



Morel Cyclamen

Bill: That was brutal! Last, but hardly least, let's move on to Morel cyclamen, which have displayed at the PanAmerican facility for many years now. Morel is sold exclusively through Ball Seed in North America. This century-old French breeder is solely dedicated to cyclamen and always has cool intros.

This year, they're showing new colors in their large-sized Halios Select series: Red Satisfaction, Curly Indian Rose and Curly Salmon.

New in their midi-sized Indiaka assortment with its airbrushed-look blooms is Light Rose. And the Tianis midi-sized series adds Light Pink Purple Eye, Neon Rose, Rose with Eye, Rose Flame and Improved Pure White. They also had some new mini types, including Smartiz Pure White and Magenta Tuxedo (pictured). See them in our Morel video **HERE.**





It's a Wrap!

Chris: Good golly! That was a boatload of introductions for one stop. I almost feel I should apologize for writing so much. But, truly, this Ball stop is about the biggest of the whole trip. And as it is, we only hit the highlights!

However, as always, we not only write about it, and take pictures of it, we record it! You'll see more of the introductions if you click any of the video links above. We'll be posting more through

the week, too, so check back to our YouTube page, www.youtube.com/growertalks.

Any last words, Young William?

Bill: Nope! A great first day, but I think day two promises to be even better—now that we've got our sea legs … or whatever you call trial legs.

Chris: Right! Tomorrow! Wednesday, when our first stop is Green Fuse Botanicals, which also hosts Beekenkamp, Hem Genetics, Shoneveld and Westhoff. And then a bit further north to Santa Barbara Polo Club, home of Pacific Plug & Liner, PlantHaven, Suntory and PDSI—the Southern Living/Sunset Magazine folks.

Tune in tomorrow to see what sort of trouble we get into!





Thanks for reading! See you next time,

Chris, Jen, Bill & Osvaldo



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