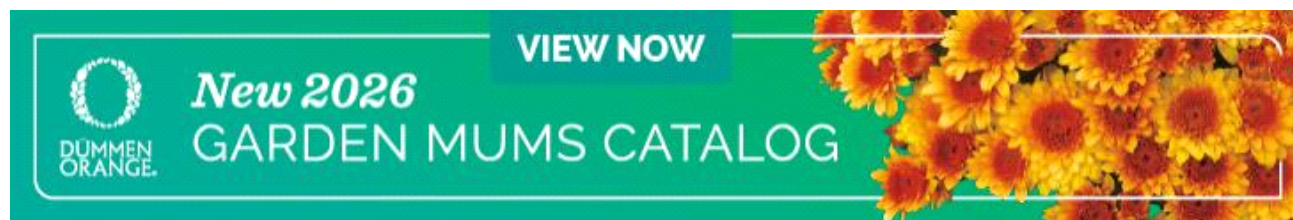


How Was Last Weekend? Random Thoughts from CAST



THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2023

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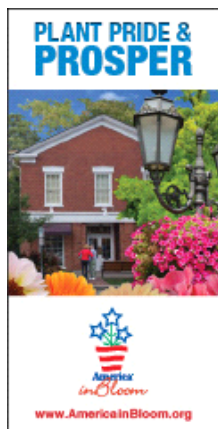
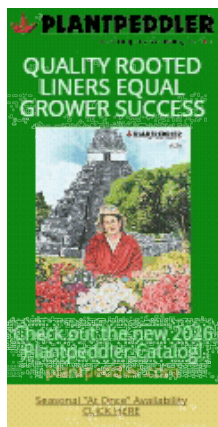
News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Scores for April 1-2
- Your comments
- Random Thoughts from CAST
- Breakthroughs
- Filling out catalogs
- Those wacky taxonomists
- Concepts and ideas
- My favorites
- Fun names



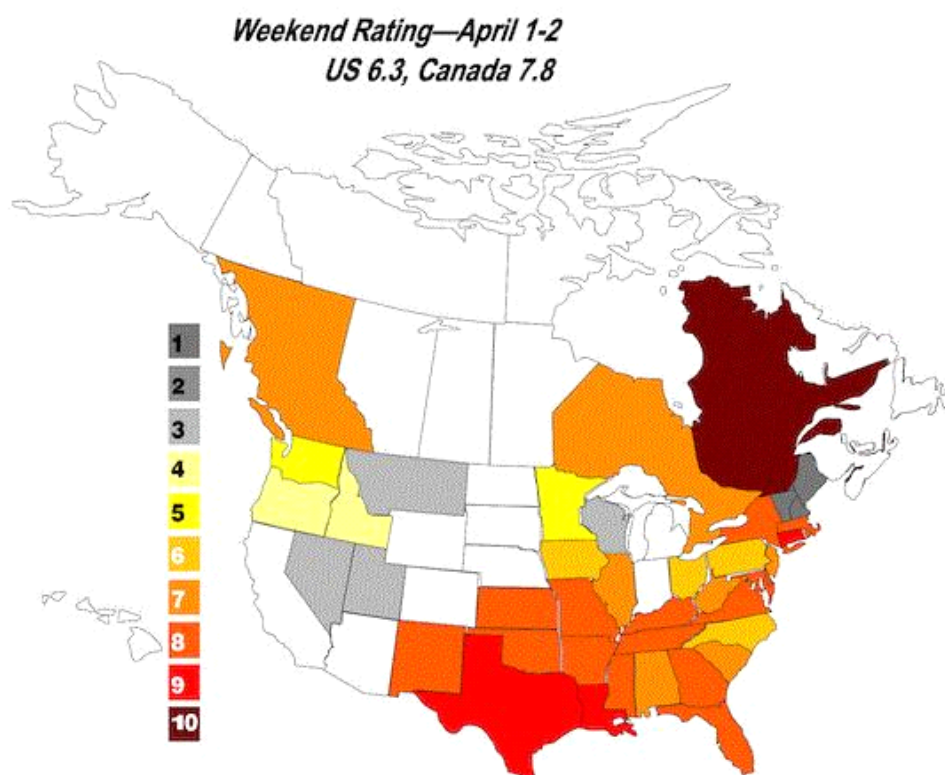
How was the first official spring weekend of 2023?



This week marks the kickoff of my three-month-long Spring Weekend Sales Survey, featuring YOUR 1 to 10 scores, plus commentary about each week direct from where the rubber meets the road (or the rain meets the pavement or the cash hits the register). Thanks to all who sent me scores this week. Please keep them coming! And if you didn't participate, consider joining in when you get that email from me Monday morning asking how your previous week/weekend went.

Anyway, on to the scores for April 1-2, which were ... drum roll, please ... **6.3 in the U.S.** and **7.8 in Canada.**

Here's the map:



That's based on 73 scores from 39 states and three provinces. (Note that Canada only had four scores, one of which was a 10; if I drop out that perfect score, the average comes down to a more-typical 6.8.). You sent in two 10s and four 1s. And a couple of those 1s were actually 0s, but my scoring system doesn't go that low.

Hmmm, I wrote "more-typical" above; I wonder what "more-typical" really means? Let's go back in time to see the scores from the first weekend of my survey (late March/early April).

Year	U.S	Canada
2023	6.3	7.8
2022	6.2	4.4
2021	8.9	10.0 (Easter)
2020	5.7	3.0 (the pandemic lockdown)
2019	7.2	5.9
2018	5.3	6.4 (Easter)
2017	6.1	4.2
2016	6.3	6.1
2015	5.6	3.2
2014	3.8	2.5
2013	*	*

2012 7.0 1.0

Avg. 6.3 4.7

**In 2013, I didn't plan to do the survey, but popular demand had me start it up again. I haven't stopped since.*

If we toss out the anomaly that was 2021, the average drops to 5.9/4.1

So just about dead on the average in the U.S. and well above the average in Canada (which, again, only sent in four scores vs. the more usual eight to 12).



Your comments

Overall, your notes about your scores reflect positive feelings about how the season is starting out. Of course, you folks are notoriously optimistic, which is why I love you!

Illinois (10): "We had a great turnout despite the wild (tornado) weather in our area. Amazing kickoff for the season."—*Candi Scheuermann, Green View Companies*

Minnesota (9): "Our plants are mostly sold online, so our weekend sales probably differ from garden centers. However, we have seen strong demand all spring, which is equal to the last three years. I expected that sales volume would level off with more people traveling and the economy slowing. No sign of that so far!"—*Bill Carter, Prairie Moon Nursery*

Texas (9): "Perfect weather on Saturday, big open on Sunday, followed by heavy rains and hail. Still a good weekend."—*Katherine Smith, Smith's Gardentown*

OK, AR, TN, MS, KY, IL & MO (8): "For the second weekend in a row, Sunday was bigger than Saturday. Couple of things led to this: On both weekends, we had a lot of rain on Friday and I think it took a day or so for things to dry out enough for people to get back in their yards. Also, the past two Saturdays have been very windy, with gusts over 30 mph. In addition, we obviously saw some impact in Little Rock, as people there are recovering from the devastating tornado."—*Alex Van Der Hengst, South Central Growers, Tennessee*

Washington (8): "A good start to the spring season. It's been unseasonably cool here yet, so customers are hesitant to buy too much, but the anticipation of spring is palpable!"—*David Vos, Vander Giessen Nursery*

Kentucky (8): "Considered giving a higher score, but the torrential rain, scattered tornadoes, downed power lines and consistent 40 mph wind Friday and Saturday kinda put a damper on what was otherwise a great way to start April. This made three straight weekends of really bad weather ... we had wind gusts recorded at 74 mph a week ago. Widespread damage around here all three weekends. Gotta love Kentucky weather!"—*Jesse Shelton, Shelton's Greenhouses*

Alabama (8): "Would be a 10 if it weren't for the rain slowing us down some."—*John David Boone, Dothan Nurseries*

New York (8): "Mostly sunny weekend, although brisk temps on Sunday. Good foot traffic, customers anxious to see color and flowers."—*Deborah Genrich, Genrich's Garden Center, Florist, Gift & Greenhouses*

Ontario, Canada (7): "The snow is finally gone. This weekend's sales were equal to last year's sales (after three months of 10% to 20% slower sales)."—*Maryann Vandermeer, Vandermeer Nursery*

Maryland (7): “Up 30% over last year, down 15% from 2021. Still some cold weather and thunderstorms.”—*Carrie Engel, Valley View Farms*

Virginia (7): “While it’s still early in the season, all indications point towards a strong spring season! Anything edible has been especially popular so far!”—*Gary Garner III, Gary’s Garden Center*

British Columbia, Canada (6): “It has been so cold here that I was surprised by your email arriving. Feels like a good March, with a few days of April each week. Good for shrub and perennial sales, though.”—*John Derrick, Elk Lake Garden Center*

Nevada (3): “Never thought we would wish for the return of the drought ... but winter is hanging on and it’s still snowing. All the ski resorts have moved their close day to summer.”—*Bruce Gescheider, Moana Nursery*

Idaho (3): “Hi, Chris. I am reporting to you from the frozen tundra otherwise known as Southern Idaho. We had rain and snow this weekend and now 25- to 35-mile-an hour winds ... wait ... was that? ... naw, could it have been a flying hanging basket? ... They say spring will hit just in time for Easter. Fingers crossed!”—*Dave Holley, Moss Greenhouses*



Random thoughts from CAST

My first random thought: I’ve gotten used to calling it “CAST”—short for California Spring Trials—because, frankly, too few people know what I’m talking about if I say, “Pack Trials.” I have to stop and explain, and try to find an actual pack to show them what it is. Not that there weren’t some packs and some actual comparison trials at CAST this year, most notably at Syngenta, who’s rolling out a series-wide upgrade of their venerable Delta pansies, which they say (based on confidential sales data) is the best-selling pansy in North America AND the world. You don’t upgrade something like that lightly, hence their desire to show the new one (Delta Pro) next to three leading comparisons, Spring Matrix (PanAmerican Seed), Inspire Plus (Benary) and Spring Grandio (Sakata), as well as their own original Deltas (now called Delta Classic), which are being phased out as the colors get “Pro’d.”

Also, when I make the above Pack Trials explanation, I get called Pa-Paw, and able to out-work kids half my age, I don’t need that.



I was excited to see actual packs at Pack Trials.

A few more notes from my notes:



Biggest breakthrough

I'd have to say it's Caliburst seed petchoa from PanAmerican Seed. First, it's only the third (well, now fourth) petunia/calibrachoa cross on the market that I'm aware of, the first being Calitunia from Danziger, the second being SuperCal Petunia from Sakata. This year, PAS partner breeding company Selecta One introduced their own petchoa series, called EnViva, which launches with four colors: Pink, Red, Blue, White. And, now, thanks to PAS, we have a seed petchoa, Caliburst, which launches with just one color, Yellow (but we're assured that more are coming). Germ is 85%, they say.



Does the world want a seed petchoa when they're still working on accepting (and pronouncing) the vegetative ones? We'll see! But it should offer great garden performance, interesting colors and perhaps a lower price point.

(BTW, we pronounce it "pet-koa," not "pe-cho-ah," because it's a combination of PETunia and calibra-CHOA.)



Breeders filling out their catalogs

Back in 1996, Daehnfeldt (now part of Sakata) launched its first impatiens series, called Carnival, in spite of the overwhelming dominance of then-industry-leaders Accent, Impulse and Super Elfin, not to mention all the other series fighting for market share. When I asked them why, they explained that it was because the impatiens pie was very big, and if they could carve off even a little slice of it, it could be lucrative.

This is the reason breeders continue to add what are disparagingly called “me-too” lines to their catalogs. Why let the competition get all the business when you can put your own spin on a class? Plus, if the other guy has a crop failure, you may be ready to fill the order. There's nothing wrong with this strategy.



Talavera Coleus.

Here are a few examples of new or expanding lines: Benary added four primula series (giving them a total of six). Syngenta added a succulent program and a vegetative coleus collection called Talavera. Schoneveld launched a gerbera series, Joybera. Dümmer Orange has a new fuchsia collection. Takii has a zinnia series, Belize, with both single and double flowers. And we can't even count the number of begonia, dianthus, dahlia, lavender, leucanthemum and salvia series/collections we've watched breeders add to their portfolios in recent years.

Those wacky taxonomists

Is it *Primula acaulis* or *P. vulgaris*? We saw it both ways ... in one case, at the same breeder. The short answer is yes, both are acceptable—although the former is the current and correct taxonomical name, if you care about such things.

But what about those little baby breathe-like euphorbia fillers, which are now being dubbed *Chamaesyce hypericifolia*, as we saw on the signs at Benary over their new Starpleasure Frost? I mean, it's one thing to be taxonomically correct; it's something else completely when the new name is unpronounceable (shammeh-syk-ee? Sham-EE-syk?).

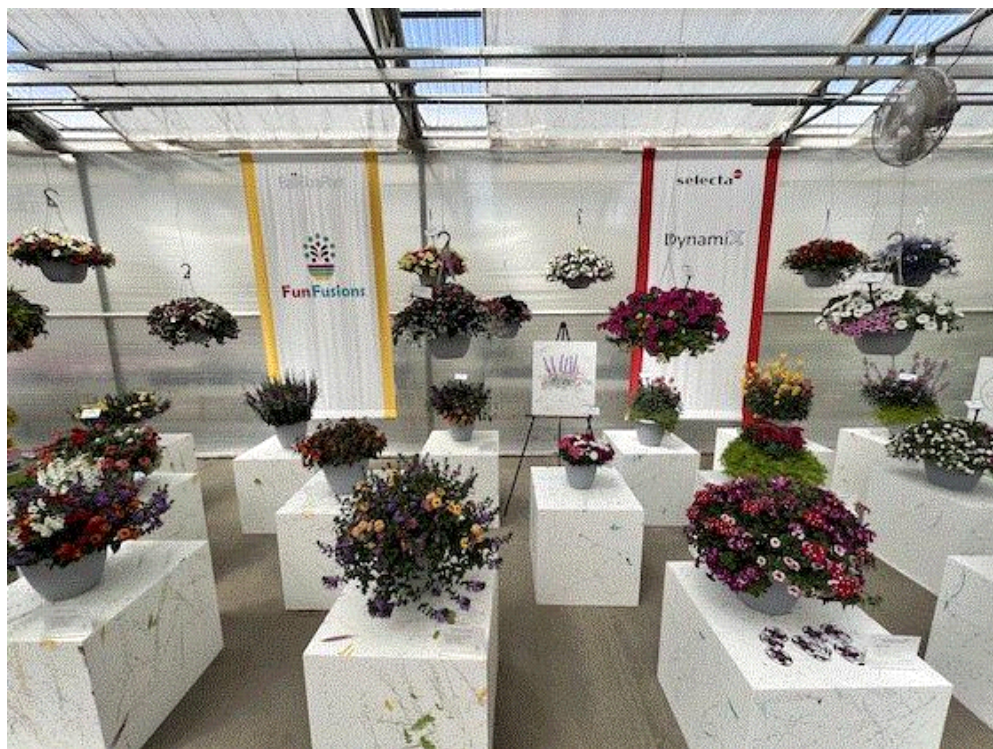
At least *Chamaesyce* has some romantically wonderful common names: graceful sandmat, graceful spurge, chickenweed, large-spotted spurge, garden spurge, fluxweed ... Oh yeah, those will sell it!

Reminders, concepts, suggestions, programs

It's always something you have to be aware of when looking at displays at CAST, Cultivate, IPM, Flower Trials or any other industry event: Is this an actual for-sale program? Or is it just a concept, idea or inspiration? Not that there's anything wrong with concepts and ideas—we need all the inspiration and recipes we can get! We just have to understand the difference.



For instance, Benary displayed “Mix It Up” combos (above) featuring both seed and vegetative varieties. Scores of colorful recipes with imaginative names and plant-o-gram descriptions. But you can't tell them, “Send me 100 Daydream and 100 Moon & Stars” and get the cuttings or plugs pre-packaged like with some other programs. The same goes for similar recipe and plant-o-gram concepts from Ball FloraPlant (“FunFusions”) and Selecta (“Dynamix”). Benary also reminded us that some of their annuals also work as potted gift plants (“Benary to Go”) and that herbs are more fun and lucrative when planted in tasty combinations (“Season Me! Fusions”).



FunFusions, Dynamix (say "dy-NAMIX").

Here's a timely suggestion/program from PanAmerican Seed: Sow Fast, Grow Fast. They've organized a detailed list of more than 150 varieties of annuals that you can grow in a gallon late in the season, from sow to ship, in 10 weeks or less. The idea is to help you fill empty benches and get one more turn from your greenhouse. Smart!

My favorites

It's the most common question I'm asked during CAST. The quick answer is, "I like anything that will make YOU money!"

But as a lover of tropical plants, and for my own garden, I'm partial to Tecoma Kalama (below) from Ball Ingenuity. Tecoma is a trumpet bush, with flowers in lush, fruity shades from yellow to deep orange. They make vigorous small bushes or even trees, but Kalama (which means "torch" or "light" in Hawaiian) is bred to be more compact (about 18- to 24-in. tall) and tidy. The collection offers three colors: Blood Orange, Papaya and Pomegranate.



Along those same lines, I'd like to try the canna lilies from first-time CAST exhibitor Saad Assaf, an Israeli breeding company that specializes in canna and amaryllis. They say they can produce virus-free vegetative cuttings from the rhizomes, and ship them to you for sticking, rooting and bumping up. Varieties include many of your favorite older types with green, bronze and variegated bronze foliage, and a wide range of flower colors and patterns. (They do seed cannas, too.)



Yet again on those lines, Takii was promoting the use of their Cannova Bronze Peach as an indoor plant ("Cannova Casa"). Sell them young, early in the season, and let the homeowner enjoy them as a houseplant for up to 10 weeks until the plant is ready to go out on the summer patio. (They say the bronze foliage will hold up better indoors than the green-leaf varieties.)

Of all the colorful coleus we saw, Premium Sun Coral Candy (PanAmerican Seed) stood out for its eye-popping color that I think will compliment your summer plants AND your fall flowers. It's a seed coleus that takes full sun. As a bonus, it's an AAS winner.



Another one I'd like to try is Stonehedge Begonia (Benary). This giant—available in two bronze-leaf colors to start—is said to grow up to 5-ft. tall! I enjoy large begonias in my garden, especially Dragon Wing, so I'm curious how this one will perform.



Lastly, of all the colorful petunias I saw up and down the coast, for some reason Amazonas Plum Cockatoo (Danziger) stuck in my head. Perhaps it helps that they say that bit of green chlorophyll in the flower petal gives them more durability, almost like a leaf.



If you want to see all these and many, many more, watch our videos from the road! The whole playlist—all 23 videos—is available [HERE](#). And if you missed our writing from the road, it's at www.californiatrials.com. Just click “Acres of buZZ” at the bottom.

Fun and memorable names

A good name sticks with you throughout CAST and beyond. Then again, so does a weird one ...

- Joybera Gerbera series (Schoneveld)
- Turtle Love Hybrid Begonia (Green Fuse)
- Gingersnap Crazytunia (Westhoff)
- Lotty Dotty Hypoestes series (Westhoff)
- Dizz, Swoop and Sugar Shake Echibeckia (PP&L)
- Escential Nemesia (PlantHaven), which includes the color Zazzleberry (which reminded us of EuroAmerican Propagator's Pink Zazzle Gomphrena)
- Honeysticks Agastache (Dümmen Orange)
- Red Maple SuperCal Premium (Sakata). That's how to guarantee Canadian sales!
- Decorative Franklin Calandiva (Dümmen Orange)

Finally ...

Don't forget to sign up for our webinar “Do or Dianthus Part 2: Being Successful from Rooting to Finishing. It's today (Thursday), April 6, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern/Noon Central.

In it, guest expert Gary Vollmer and his two expert assistants, James Doukas and Nathan Jahnke, will cover all the crop culture details you need to grow fantastic dianthus of any form. And Nathan will cover some new research he's been working on.

Sign up at www.growertalks.com/webinars.

If you miss it, worry not: you'll be able to find it and Part 1 at the same link—just scroll to the “available now” section.




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Feel free to email me at beytes@growertalks.com if you have ideas, comments or questions.

See you next time,

Chi

Chris Beytes

Editor

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