California Spring Trials Day 3: Dümmen Orange; Sakata; Kientzler



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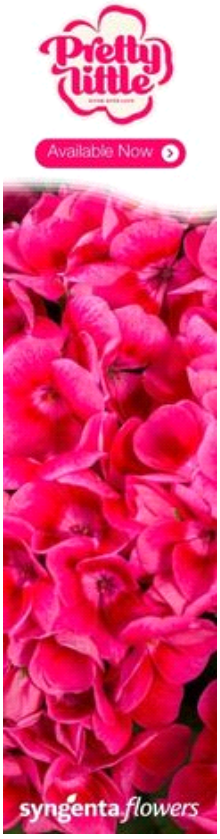
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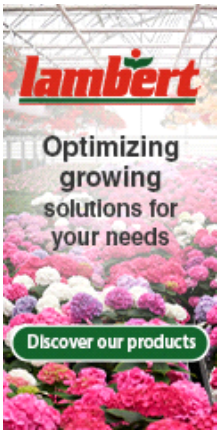
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Acres of buzz from California Trials

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Third Time's the Charm

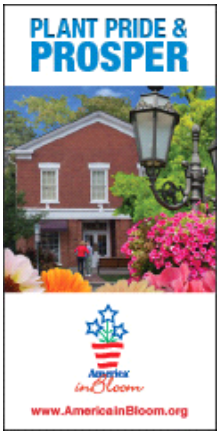
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Chris: By the third time we mean third day, of course, of our five-day coverage of the 2024 California Spring Trials, in which we visited two well-known breeders: Germany's Dümmen Orange and Japan's Sakata. The only downside? A two-hour drive between the two locations. But we endured, eh, Young William—because, hey, we write about flowers for a living!

Bill: I always say we're blessed to be in this industry, where the products that are grown and sold make people happy and add joy to their lives. It sounds trite, but it's true. Our Cali trip every







year is energizing because we see so many new plants and engage with hundreds of like-minded plant professionals, old friends and new folks, as well.

Chris: For those of you who have to actually work for a living, our goal is to make you feel like you're here at Spring Trials, getting the scoop on potential additions to your mix in 2025. Hopefully, reading this newsletter gets you close, and our videos and social media put more icing on the cake.

Bill: If you can't get to CAST, be sure to check out your local field trials and grower trials this summer to get a sense of how many of the new varieties we're writing about perform in-ground and in your region. But enough of that—take us to stop one of the day, Chris.



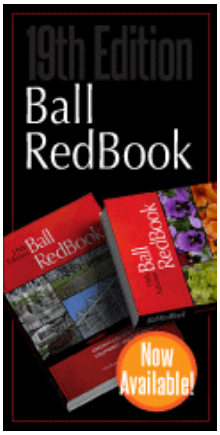
Dümmen Orange: 100+ Intros in a Stunning Setting

DÜMMEN ORANGE ANNUALS VIDEO

DÜMMEN ORANGE PERENNIALS VIDEO

Chris: Dümmen Orange wants to project an image of quality, so they chose a quality venue for their temporary trial setup—this year, the lovely, classy vineyard called Center of Effort (we sampled some of their chardonnay and pinot noir at lunch—excellent!).

Bill: We used to hear a lot of "retail display and positioning" talk at CAST and see displays built to mimic garden centers, but that trend seems to have run its course. Dümmen brought the concept back this year, building garden center-style vignettes around key products, organizing early season perennials with combos, hanging baskets and component plants to inspire new


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ways to use perennials. Color blocking core annuals like petunias, calibrachoas and verbenas resonates with big box buyers and suppliers. And displaying a class like geranium creatively to focus on best sellers in assorted pot sizes and baskets helps maximize space and encourages shoppers to buy multiples.

Chris: On to the plants, starting with those geraniums. Noteworthy is a new interspecific series called Glory Days. Interspecifics cross zonal and ivy geraniums, usually favoring one or the other. Glory Days has ivy-like single flowers and zonal-style foliage (below). The flowers are big and colorful, in two ivy colors: Pink Bicolor and Orange Bicolor. More are on the way, they say. Also, their zonal Savannah series gets two additions, Bright Red and Pink Shades.



Bill: Another new series is Verbena Empress Sun Kiss, bred to be compact for containers and combos, but also for flowers that pop up far enough above the foliage to stand out more than the other, more prostrate types. They're early to flower, and heat and humidity tolerant. The series launches with Red, White, Blue and Pink. Dümmen is also using them in Confetti combos.



Chris: I liked the succulent wreathes they dotted them into, too. Here’s a picture of one:



How about calibrachoa, of which Dümmen has dozens? The Tik Tok series, named for the strong star or “clock hands” pattern in the flowers, gets Sky Blue and Crystal. Rainbow (a collection that changes color based on temperature) gets Iced Blueberry. And Bloomtastic (large-flowered, vigorous) gets Sunshine, a pretty white with yellow center.

Bill: Since I’m with Tech on Demand, I’ll talk Intrinsa. As a reminder, it’s new breeding for disease resistance in key classes for the most common challenges. For instance, the Potunia Petunia series has been adding Intrinsa breeding for Tobacco Mosaic Virus (TMV) resistance and all of the new intros this year join the club. The standout variety for 2025 sales is Potunia Plus Black Satin—you guessed it, a dark black petunia in the Plus sub-series, which are 25% larger than standard Potunias.



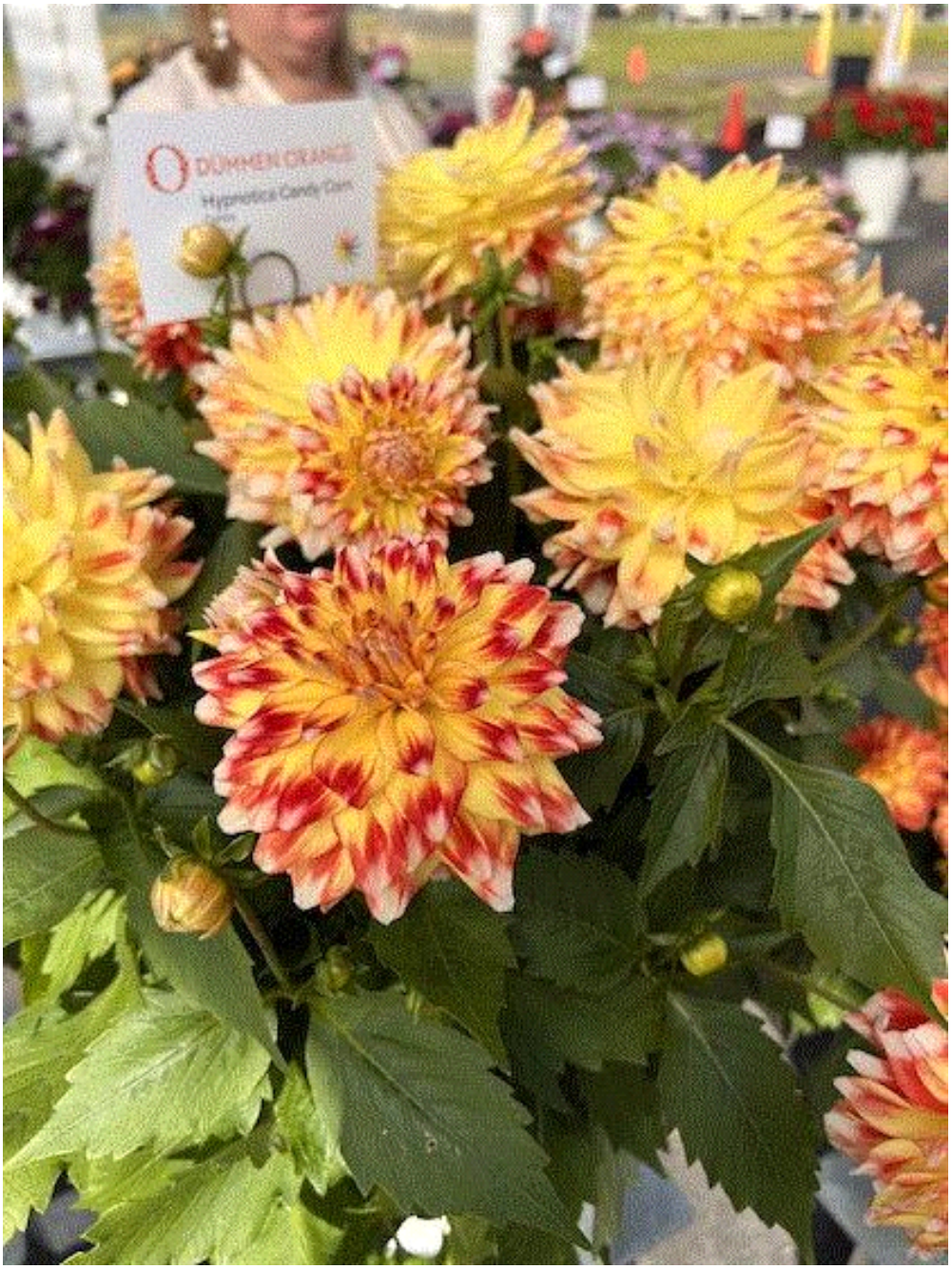
Chris: I'm glad you left me the new Scala Scaveola, Bill, because I like that its name—Cappello—means "hat" in Italian. It's the first time I've heard a variety's habit described as "hat-like." Maybe that's not quite accurate, but Scala Cappello is compact, tidy and nicely mounding/trailing. Two colors: Purple and White.



Got any honorable mentions, Bill?

Bill: I'll cover a few more—a couple coleus and a fantastic dahlia. The Downtown Coleus collection adds cities from Australia and Texas to the lineup. Port Fairy is a bright chartreuse with yellow veins, and Dallas is dark burgundy and looked more compact, probably positioned for combos.

Lastly, Dahlia Hypnotica Candy Corn (below). It honestly has flower petals that look like the love-it-or-hate-it Halloween candy. I bet this will have more fans … it's stunning. And it fits right into the medium-vigor series.



Chris: Sell it at Halloween! Okay, on to some perennial highlights. Dümmen is a perennial breeding company, too, after all. In fact, I think they had as many new perennials as they did annuals. I'll start with Salvia Noble Knight, which, based on the name, is aimed at the venerable old May Night (Mainacht), which has been around forever and is still popular. The *S. nemarosa* has the same full foliage and deep blue color, but it will keep on flowering and flowering.



Bill: As more and more of you carve out pollinator assortments and consumers expect to find pollinator-friendly plants at retail, I'm always on the lookout for new varieties that fit that category. The new Buddleia Little Rock Stars collection fits the bill. It's more compact, with smaller flower plumes than most other buddleia. But that makes it easier to ship and more floriferous, with four to six flowers when it's retail-ready, they say. There are five colors in the new collection.

Chris: I think we've seen new dianthus at just about every trial and Dümmen is no exception, with the new hybrid Cliff series offering Pink Spot, with speckled flowers, and Red Spot, with double carnation-like flowers.

Bill: For the earliest of perennials, there are two new colors in the low-growing groundcover Phlox Woodlander series, Periwinkle and Purple. Periwinkle is a bit taller and/or more vigorous.



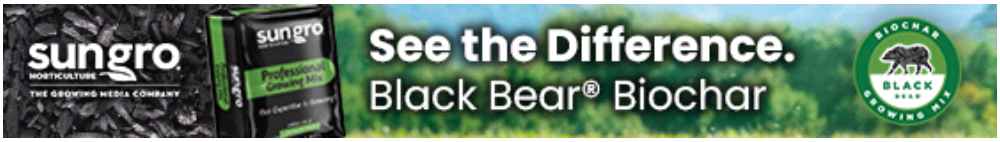
Chris: Lastly, how about two series of delosperma, aka ice plant. Solstice (below) has large flowers that are bred to be open by 10:00 a.m. (we joked about which time zone and does it adjust for daylight saving time). Rock Crystals, meanwhile, is very low-growing with small flowers. Both have the bright flowers delosperma is known for.



Bill: It was nice that we wrapped up our tour and videos just in time for lunch because Dümmen always does it in style.

Chris: I must say, there are worse things than lunch at a vineyard, complete with wine samples. But we enjoyed it in extreme moderation because we had a two-hour drive north to Stop 2 for the

day: Sakata.



Sakata Seed ... and Vegetative Annuals

SAKATA VIDEO

Bill: I'm always impressed by the Sakata team at CAST in Salinas because no matter who tours us through the trials, they know the product lines inside and out—jumping between seed and vegetative varieties seamlessly. We started off with seed annuals, transitioned to vegetative and wrapped up with a new combo program that mixed both types—all rooted in excellent garden performance.

Chris: I remember the old days when we'd see hundreds of pansies at Sakata. This year, the offering was much more humble, but there were a couple of additions and improvements, most notably Viola ColorMax White, ColorMax being their large-flowered viola series that is basically a multiflora pansy on a tough viola chassis. White is important, because it goes into just about every mix.



Bill: I'll touch on a few other highlights from the seed assortment, then you can finish them off, boss. The first bicolor in the Candy Tops snapdragon series is Pink Bicolor, which joins five existing colors in the dwarf pack series.



Also new in seed from Sakata is ornamental cabbage Osaka IQ White, with the IQ meaning improved quality. This cabbage is more compact than the previous white (8-in. across versus 14) and finishes at the same time as its series partners Red and Pink Bicolor.

Lastly, before I pass the mic is Viking White on Green, part of the interspecific begonia Viking collection. As a refresher, there are three different Vikings—the upright standard, XL (20% bigger) and Explorer (spreading/trailing). Viking White is the first white in the whole series. We expect to see whites in all three sizes eventually.



Chris: Lastly in seed, you will want to check out Celosia Burning Embers, an All-America

Selections winner for 2024. Says AAS of the winner, it's "bred for its gorgeous bronze foliage with dark pink veins that contrast nicely with the vibrant pink flower plumes. Plants are well-branched and produce more flowers over a longer bloom time."



Bill: Now, onto Sakata's vegetative breeding, starting with the flagship SunPatiens. I don't think I need to explain why new intros in this program are important … they're true industry rockstars. New in the Vigorous line is Purple, a strong color addition that will quickly find its place in the Northern landscape market. And new in the Compact line are Lavender, a much-requested soft pink color, and Candy, improved for timing and habit to match the rest.

Chris: SuperCal petunias have two lines: the classics called just SuperCal, which are semi-spreading; and SuperCal Premium, which isn't better than SuperCal as the name might suggest, just more upright in habit. Premium gets Pink Mist, Rose Star and Rose Pink; while SuperCal gets the vivid Shocking Pink. To me, Rose Star was the standout for its 55-mph color.



Bill: The compact calibrachoas that have been introduced over the past few years have really started to grow on me. I see a place for them in color bowls, mixes and even window boxes. Sakata showed us new Calipetite calibrachoas with unique colors and they're beautiful—Apricot Dream and Blue Splash. Remember: Don't hit these with any PGRs! Grow them warm and feed them well, they suggest.



Chris: We finished up our tour of Sakata with vegetables, all of which come from their commercial vegetable breeding program, so you know they're solid performers. Interesting offerings include a purple broccoli called Purple Magic; two determinate roma (saladette) tomatoes called Inca and Kuzco, both of which have good disease packages and take the heat (Kuzco takes a bit more); and Unicron jalapeno pepper (yes, that's the correct spelling), said to produce the largest fruits of

any jalapeno—5 inches! Anybody want to challenge that? Let us know.



Coleus, Begonias & More from Kientzler

KIENTZLER VIDEO

Bill: Sharing space at Sakata was well-known German breeder Kientzler, one of the pioneers of vegetative annuals. Last year, we got a sneak peek at Kientzler's new begonia series, Bellissa, and now it's a full release. The four-color, heat-tolerant hybrid series (Orange, Red, White and Yellow) has an upright habit and is suitable for shipping without damage and holds up well at retail, they say.



Chris: I became a quick fan of their new Coleus Terrascape series when they told me it's bred by Dr. Dave Clark at the University of Florida, my alma mater. That program has delivered a lot of good sun-loving/part-shade coleus to the market and I can only assume they're continuing to do so, now through Kientzler. They showed both upright and mounded types.



Bill: We saw delosperma earlier today at Dümmen Orange and again at Kientzler. The new Sun Diamonds series was bred in Japan and has a very free-flowering habit. We were told it will bloom from this time of year (early spring) through September. The series launches with five colors.



Chris: One more coleus to mention and it's one that should be a Halloween hit (didn't I mention Halloween earlier in this newsletter?). Skeletal featured bone-like serrations on the two-tone red-and-yellow foliage. There have probably been (and still are) similar coleus forms on the market; Kientzler was smart enough to call it out with a clever name.



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Bill: Tomorrow promises to be a busy day, with three big stops, but I'm expecting to see a LOT of new varieties with major wow factor. I think we start the day at Takii before heading north to Danziger and Syngenta, right, boss?

Chris: You've got it! A slight change in plans from our original schedule, due to some unexpected traffic on 101 today—but that's okay, we roll with the punches. And it gave you more backseat

time on your laptop, eh, Bill?

Bill: In between tours, videos, newsletter writing and meals, I've been posting photo drops to **FACEBOOK** and **INSTAGRAM**, as well as uploading a few short videos. Judging by the number of views and likes, plenty of folks are following the #CAST24 and #CASpringTrials hashtags to see what's going on behind the scenes in California. I'll keep it up as long as the industry is watching on social.

Chris: Short reels and pretty plant pics have their place, but the full stories are told in our videos, so be sure to subscribe to the *GrowerTalks* YouTube channel so you never miss a video. You can find our **CAST PLAYLIST HERE**.

Bill: I completely agree, Chris, and we've heard plenty of positive comments about the videos from attendees and the breeding companies as we visit trials, but I'd really like to hear from our newsletter readers. **EMAIL ME** with any thoughts or comments about how we can make our coverage better or if you like what we're doing.













Thanks for reading! See you tomorrow!

Chris, Jen, Bill & Osvaldo



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