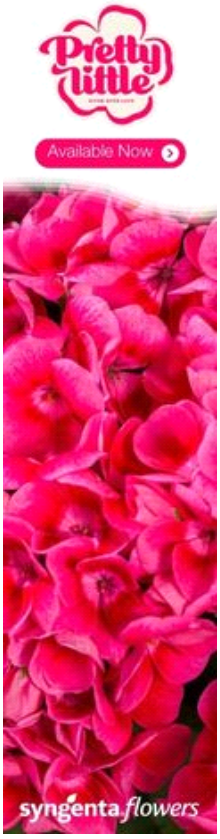
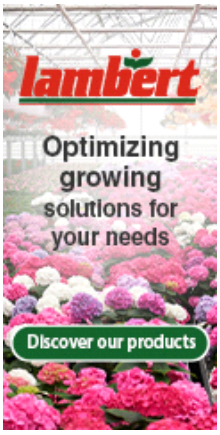
California Spring Trials Day 4: American Takii; HilverdaFlorist; Danziger; Syngenta









Acres of buzz from California Trials

IN THIS EDITION

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- Takii
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Editors in the Wild

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Bill: Four days into California Spring Trials 2024 coverage and I think we're all feeling pretty good! Jen's still happy, Osvaldo's back hasn't given out under the weight of his video gear, and you and I are still goofing off and getting scolded by them both.

Chris: Somebody asked me, "How's it going?" and I said that we're at our best today—more than half done, so we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. We've found our groove, we've still got energy and we haven't killed each other yet. Tomorrow may be another matter, but for now,



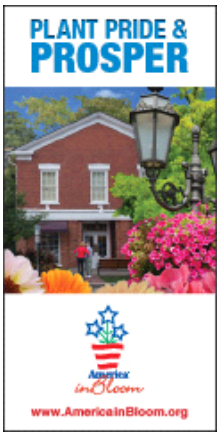


covering CAST is a great job!

Bill: If this is a job, then we'd better get down to business because with three stops and four breeding companies on today's agenda, our list of varieties to cover is pretty long. Why don't you tell our dear readers where we stopped today, boss?

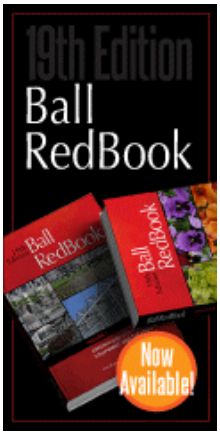
Chris: We started in Salinas at Takii, drove up to Gilroy and Danziger at Headstart Nursery (which is right behind Garlic World if you're ever looking for it), and finally Syngenta, at the old home of Goldsmith Seeds (they probably hate me saying that, but it's how I'll always think of the beautiful facility on Hecker Pass Road ... although Syngenta has done a fine job keeping it colorful both outside and inside the greenhouses. More on that later. For now, Takii.







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Takii's Animal Kingdom

TAKII VIDEO

Bill: I've come to expect a few certainties at Takii after covering their trials for so many years: ornamental cabbage and kale, canna lilies, pretty cut flowers ... and donuts. I enjoyed all four this year.



Chris: I saw you head straight for the snack table upon arrival. Me, I headed straight for their most colorful intro for 2024: Canna Cannova Gold Leopard. This is a seed canna, part of their popular Cannova line, featuring rich yellow flowers speckled with orange. Foliage is bright green. Availability-wise, the seed is exclusive to Ball Seed, but anyone can buy plugs of Gold Leopard ... and why wouldn't you?



Bill: My highlight from this stop was the new dark-leaf dahlia, also from seed called Black Forest Ruby. We see a lot of dahlias out here, but I'm not sure if we've seen a seed dahlia in years. Correct us if we're wrong, but we were told this is one of only maybe two commercial seed dahlias on the market—and the only dark-leaf seed variety. It has semi-double to double flowers and a final height of about knee-high. It'll work well in quarts to gallons and more colors are coming. But, wait! There's more ...



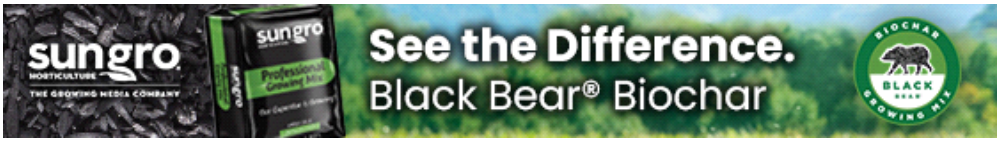
Chris: Interestingly, Black Forest Ruby is open pollinated, not an F1 hybrid. “Why?” we asked. Because dahlias are an octaploid and they're naturally diverse ... or something ... we didn’t really get it. If anyone can explain it in terms a fifth-grader could understand, please email us HERE.

Bill: Some more new annuals from Takii included two new improvements in their popular Petunia Trilogy series—Red Gen 2 and Purple Gen 2; and a tasty nasturtium named Baby Red.

Chris: Bill mentioned cut flowers as a staple at Takii and he’s right—the breeders make some interesting florist items. In cut brassicas (cabbage/kale), the Crane series gets two new Cranes—Early Red and Early White. They're said to be seven to 10 days faster to harvest than regular Crane and they have longer stems. (Pro tip: Cooler temperatures give more vivid color.) Also new in brassica: Feather Crane Snow, a white partner to Feather Crane King and Feather Crane Queen. And in calistephus (aster), the Nina Plus series is a spray aster series with small, but plentiful, flowers, strong stems and good resistance to Fusarium. Four colors: Blue, Pink, Purple and White.



Now, Bill, take us on the long drive (okay, the 50-ft. walk) to HilverdaFlorist, which shares greenhouse space at Takii.



Big, Bold Color from Hilverda Florist

HILVERDAFLORIST VIDEO

Bill: I saw the alstromeria from the doorway at HilverdaFlorist and walked straight to them before

even hearing about the new intros. Talk about traffic-stopping color!

The newest members of the Inticancha series for patio pots are Paraiso, a beautiful dark purple, and Hula (below) with two-tone pink flowers tipped with green. Striking! These come from tissue culture and can finish in a gallon in just 14 to 17 weeks.



Chris: I love Hula! That color looks like spring to me. Now three new Salvia Salgoon, a hybrid of (we think) *S. guaranitica* and *S. splendens*, although we wouldn't swear to it). These are named for famous lakes of the world, such as Lake Como (light blue), Lake Flamingo (magenta) and Lake Blueberry (blue/violet). These are big, bold plants, even though they're classified as "compact."



Bill: HilverdaFlorist acquired gerbera from the “Florist” part of the company—specifically their Garvinea collections. In the standard-sized Sweet collection (good for 2.5-qt. pots) they’re adding Sweet Maggie (hot pink) and Sweet Blaze (orange and yellow). Both are below. And the mini Cheeky series (good for quarts) gets Garvinea Cheeky Hot Pink.





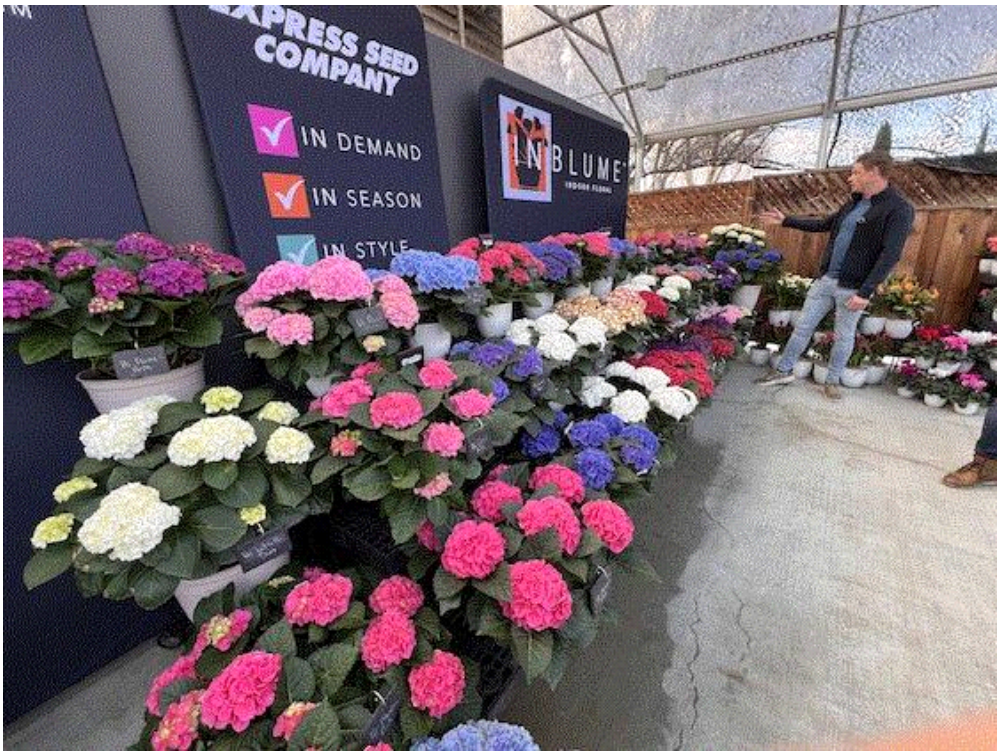
Danziger Doubles the Fun (and welcomes a new exhibitor)

DANZIGER VIDEO

Chris: Just 22 minutes up the road from Takii is a stop that hasn’t changed at all over the last ... what, 20 years? Danziger, at Headstart Nursery, right behind Garlic World (see Bill and Osvaldo eating garlic ice cream for the first time **HERE**).

Bill: Looking over the CAST itinerary Jen sent us a month or so ago, I saw a name I recognized, but didn’t expect to see on the trial stop list—Express Seed. The distribution company set up shop at Danziger to show off their new indoor potted plant program, InBlume, and their new cut flower assortment, InFlora. And we got the scoop on the HI Hydrangea assortment that Express

just picked up. This Ohio (my home state!) distribution company seems to be in growth mode.



Chris: But Danziger is our trial host, so that's who we're focused on. And may we say—and I know I speak for Jen and Bill—nobody does a cleaner, easier trial layout. It's not fancy and it's not trying to look like a garden center—just three shelves of perfect pots of each new variety, easy to study and photograph. In fact, this year, they had TWO identical mirror image displays, one at each end of the greenhouse. Why? To give attendees (and their staff) plenty of space to check out the new stuff. Speaking of which ... Bill?

Bill: Danziger's calibrachoa assortment is impressive and for 2025 they're introducing at least five. We saw four new ones in the Lia series (ideal for hanging baskets, but they'll do great in quarts, too)—Lia Abstract Lemon Cherry [below], Lia Chili Pepper, Lia Sky Blue and Lia Spark Lavender. I think Chili Pepper is my favorite with bright red blooms and yellow eyes. Also, the Eyeconic series adds a very nice Orange.



Chris: I liked Abstract Lemon Cherry—bold red and yellow, but patterned like it was hand-painted ... hence the “Abstract” moniker.

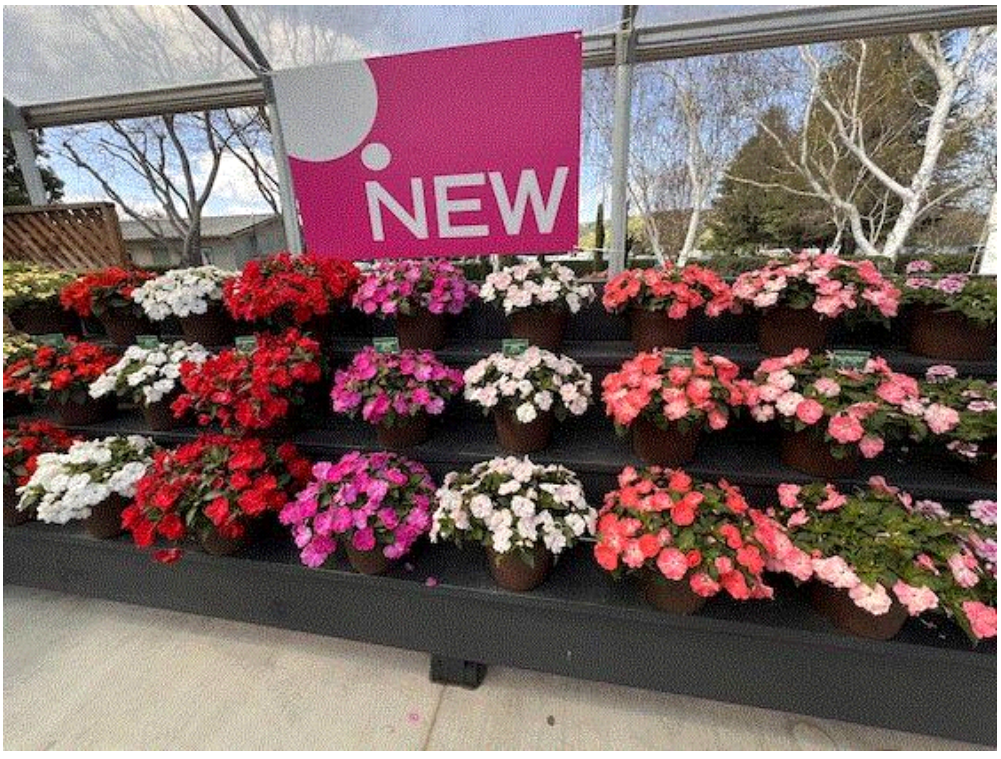
Next in line, new petunias, namely Capella, which Danziger’s Marketing & Key Accounts Manager Lisa Heredia called, “The perfect petunia,” great in propagation, produces compact quart pots, but continues to gain size in the garden for the end consumer. New are some novelties, including Fuchsia Diamond, Fuchsia Lace, Pink Morn and Rim Raspberry (Danziger knows how to rim a petunia!).

And one that Bill couldn’t quite get his head around, Ray Shadow (below). Ray is an older series that’s still popular with growers; Shadow has unusual pale yellow/dusty purple flowers that fade to dusty pink and dusty purple. Shadow seems an apt name. And one more petunia worthy of a mention: Blue Diamond, a standalone that didn’t quite fit the Capella series, but was too pretty to ignore.



Bill: We've seen a few new verbenas so far this week and each one has its place. Vanessa Bicolor Light Pink is spreading/sprawling, but has flowers that pop up above the foliage. Of course, it has the same disease-resistant breeding as the rest of the Vanessa series.

Next down the line of new intros was a new series (sort of a sub-series) of hybrid impatiens called Sol Luna Prime. The original Sol Lunas are great, but vigorous for the landscape. Primes are earlier. The new series launches with six colors. Sol Luna original also adds Orange, a key color in this class.



Chris: Golly, there's so much more to mention ... I guess I'll close with their DuraBella combos,

which are trialed and tested combo planter recipes that will fit any need, from mass market to high end. They introduced 30 new ones this year.

Bill: Before leaving the Danziger facility, I made a point to stop Lisa , our tour guide, and let her know how much I appreciate their trial. Everything looks super professional, seems strategically positioned for the market, and described with the perfect mix of grower facts and marketing flair.



Sunflowers ... and Nirvana

SYNGENTA VIDEO

Chris: Agreed! Too bad we couldn't stick on for lunch, but I think that crew from Express Seed that showed up was hungry! Anyway, across Highway 101 to Syngenta and our third trial of the day. Now, when you walk in the door to the greenhouse and immediately walk into a giant "Sunfinty" sign, you quickly get the message that this is an important intro. And it is: Sunfinity Double Yellow, a vegetative double-flowered helianthus that's a now a sister to the original Sunfinity, which we first saw in 2019. Smaller-flowered and more golden in color ... and double. Also, being vegetative, it's said to be easier and more grower-friendly. Syngenta reminds us there's POP and a **WEBSITE** to support your sales.



Bill: Probably second most important for Syngenta this year (although we're guessing) is Vinca Nirvana XDR, a vegetative sister to the superb Cora XDR Vinca, known for its high resistance to multiple strains of aerial Phytophthora (34 isolates at last count). Nirvana brings novel colors to the class, including Blue Halo, Cranberry Halo, Blackberry and Blush Splash. One note about our photos: your flowers will be much bigger; these were grown in California in winter.



Hey, boss, remind me, how many years you've been coming to Gilroy for trials?

Chris: Changing the subject, Young William? Well, my math says 30 years—I first came to “Pack Trials” in 1994, with *GrowerTalks* associate editor Kathy Pyle, who showed me the ropes. You’d hit two stops a day, talk for hours about a petunia or pansy or impatiens, look at two sowings all in packs (I don’t know if there was a single pot ... and as for combinations? They hadn’t been invented yet), and then you’d go to a nice dinner and relax in the evening. Maybe take a day to explore San Francisco or Monterey Bay. Then there was the time Dean Bemis and I took the Brits from Floranova to the Watsonville Speedway ...

Bill: Speaking of the good old days, think back a few years to 1991 and the new wave genre. Remember the song "Tainted Love"? Yep, now it’s stuck in your head, too. Petunia Painted Love from Syngenta is a standalone and a standout. The color-changing grape tones with snow-white edges are variable, but beautiful, especially in baskets and big deco pots.



Other new petunias included Dekko Rose Vein and Pinwheel Purple in the series geared toward containers and combos. Dekko Maxx adds an excellent Pink, with a lot more vigor than the standard Dekkos and durability to fill landscape beds.

Chris: Let's see, what else ... oh, yeah, the new begonias! Birthday Bash is an interesting three-color series. Picture dark fibrous-begonia foliage with double blooms that protrude on trailing stems. Colors are descriptive: Chocolate Cherry, Raspberry Sherbet and Cream Puff.



Bill: New for Syngenta's seed lines are additions to some of their core items like Pansy Delta Pro Fire; Petunia Damask Blue Veined, Purple Veined and Rose Veined; and Interspecific Impatiens Spectra Lavender Shades. And we saw some new brassicas that look like they'll be

perfect for fall sales—Bright and Early Red, White and Pink Bicolor. Pro tip: Temps of 60F will give you the strongest color.



Chris: I'll wrap up our new variety coverage with a mention of one of the perennials they showed us: Delphinium Hunky Dory. It's an F1 delphinium series with three colors: Blue, Sky Blue and White. Plants have wonderful branching, leading to loads of flowers that all open at once for a good show. Hardy to Zone 4.

Bill: Before we started shooting our video at Syngenta, we made a point to stop by the ThinkPlants area to hear about some of the unique new products available through their collaborative supply chain. The company brings together plants from multiple breeders and suppliers, and offers them through a dedicated supply chain. A few that stuck out for me were Daylily See You Tomorrow, which holds its blooms for multiple days, and Daylily Sunset Skye, which is vivid orange with yellow highlights. Hosta Sorbet is unique with clean, green foliage and burgundy speckled stems that looked just like rhubarb. And, finally, there were a ton of hydrangeas on display, but my favorite was called My Beautiful Forest, transitioning from green to white to light pink as the flowers age.

Chris: Those hydrangeas were impressive. Grown by Creekside Nursery, they looked just like florist potted hydrangeas, but we were told they these are landscape *H. macrophyllas* that will do fine on the patio and in the landscape.



Alrighty, Young William, we survived Day 4! And with luck, we painted a picture of the offerings from today's stops. Tomorrow, we wrap up our five-day 2024 tour with two stops: All the Israeli breeders (Cohen, Hishtil, Jaldety and company) and German breeder Benary. It will be an international day!

Bill: See you then. Thanks for reading! And remember—if you've got anything you want to ask us or tell us, do so by **EMAILING ME**.

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Thanks for reading! See you tomorrow!

Chris, Jen, Bill & Osvaldo



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