CAST 2025 Day 5: Benary; Cohen; Hishtil; Jaldety; Nir; Saad-Assaf



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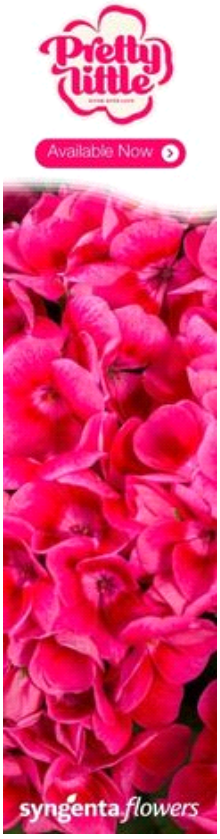
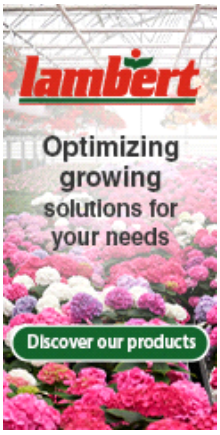






Acres of buzz from California Trials

IN THIS EDITION

Saad-Assaf
Cohen
Nir
Hishtil
Jaldety
Benary





Day 5 ... Let's Go!

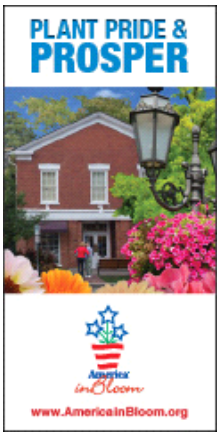
Watch the videos!

Five Israeli Companies
Benary

Bill: Well, it's the last day of our CAST 2025 coverage, and while I'm looking forward to getting home to the family, I'll miss my work family and all of the industry friends who still make the trip West for trials. Not to mention the team members at all the greenhouses who set up for and hosted hundreds of professional plant people and somehow kept the energy up and smiles on







their faces after weeks on the road.

Chris: Agreed! Maybe it's because we're in the flower business and are making the world a better, more beautiful place, but the enthusiasm for the product was as high at our last stop (Benary) as at our first (PanAmerican Seed). Even if the energy was flagging just a bit! I will say—we used to do six days and nights of coverage and only do five now, and we are glad of that.

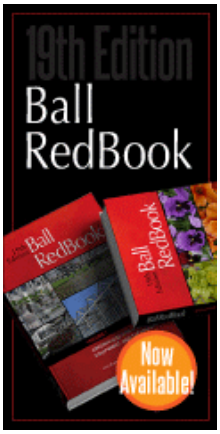
Bill: I was looking at our "numbers" this morning, and with 5,000-plus video views and almost 20,000 impressions so far this week on Facebook and Instagram, I think our coverage made its way around the world in the past five days—and that's in addition to the thousands of you who opened our daily emails. We truly appreciate the engagement, kind comments and emails, and even the occasional critique. We do it for you!

Chris: That's right. I mean, while we have fun doing it, it's a lot of work, and I don't want to be a tree falling in the forest.



Bill: And although Spring Trials has come to an end, the action is really just beginning for you





growers. Once we get through spring, before you know it it'll be time to order new varieties and trial material. We'll be covering new varieties from the trials in our July (annuals) and August (perennials) issues of *GrowerTalks* and *Green Profit* to refresh your memories, and we'll be posting plenty of videos to our social pages before ordering season begins.

Chris: But again, Bill, we are blathering. The folks want flowers! So let's take them on a brief but interesting journey to the talented breeders and propagators from Israel, shall we?



A diverse range of new products at Griggs Nursery

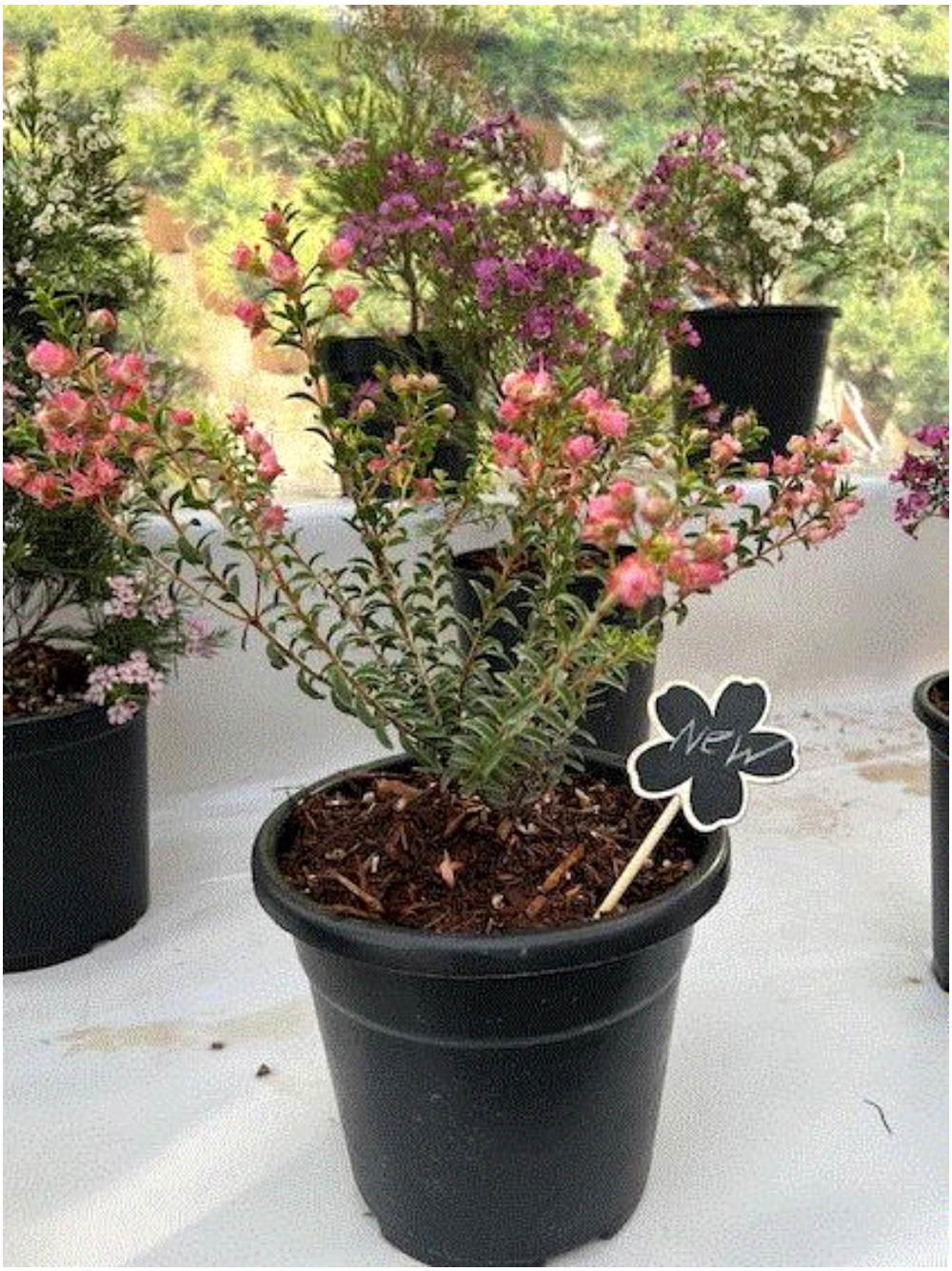
Bill: Getting the opportunity to visit with five Israeli companies in one greenhouse is a privilege I always enjoy when we come to CAST. We get to see everything from standard annuals and perennials to exotic herbs and succulents, but you never quite know what else to expect—like canna lilies.

Chris: You are speaking of Saad-Assaf, young William! Saad-Assaf is a breeder and producer of just two crops: canna lily and amaryllis. There were none of the latter to see but a decent selection of the former, which comes from their own breeding and also Anthony Tesselaar (Tropicanna). What's special is that they've developed a way to propagate them from unrooted cuttings, allowing them to ship to North America, where you (or a rooting station) can stick them and root them. They've got some customers, but are looking for more interested growers, so if that's you ...

Bill: Next up, Cohen, a huge propagator supplying the North American market and represents breeders like Westhoff, Suntory and Kerley & Co. British breeder David Kerley's petunias are legendary. In fact, he was the first to breed a vegetative double and has since released more than 30. Appropriately, new for 2026 is Tumbelina Compact Nicola, which is considered a double petunia, but has more of a semi-double flower form with bicolor purple-and-white blooms. It's striking and the plant habit is excellent compared to many other doubles.



Chris: Nir is a regular exhibitor at this stop. They breed the Australian native chamelaucium (wax flower) for both cuts and pots—we've shown you those before. Their newest offering is 20 years in the making: a cross between chamelaucium and another Aussie called verticordia to create Rey ... a nice, easy name! They've had the cut-flower version of it for a while; now they're growing it as a potted plant. The little orange flowers are said to last three months! It's new, and they're looking for partners in North America to produce it.



Bill: Waxflowers are cool, but I can't add them to recipes so let's move on ... to something edible. When I think about big herb assortments at CAST, Hishtil is the company that comes to mind first. Their assortment is massive and as we heard today, they do plenty of custom crops (assuming the numbers are large) for growers. Watch **OUR VIDEO** to see one of them and find out who requested it.

This year, Hishtil showed herbs in four different marketing categories—Grow Flow (creeping/spreading), Double Marvel (ornamental AND culinary), Durabello (climate-resilient) and XHishtil (disease-tolerant) and you'll find these designations in their new online catalog.



Chris: Speaking of dinner, if you want to add a warm, woody, subtly floral hint of bay to your soups and stews, Hishtil even offers sweet bay (*Laurus nobilis*).

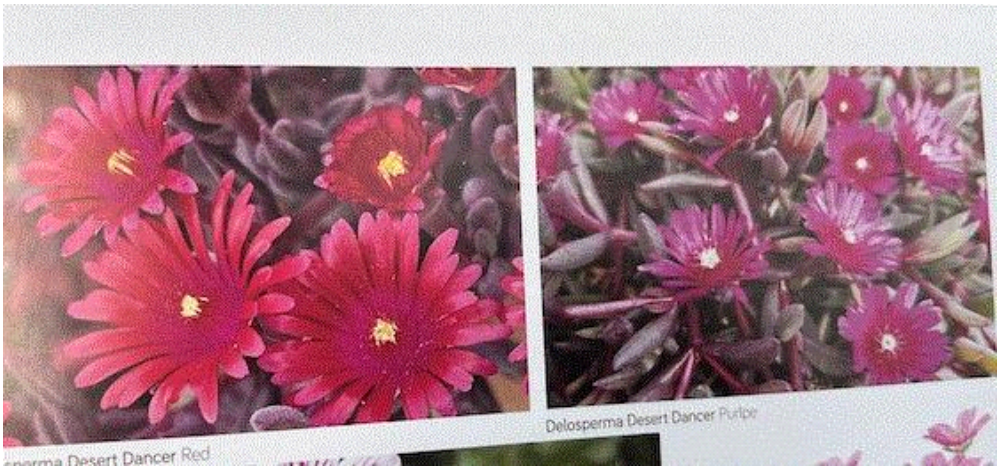
Bill: A couple more herby intros from Hishtil with the XHishtil designation included Tolergon, a French tarragon with excellent disease resistance and a powdery mildew-resistant salvia with unique foliage named Ovalvet.

Chris: Touching and sniffing all those pungent herbs is always fun, eh? Makes me want to plant an herb garden. Okay, next up is Jaldety, which specializes in perennials and succulents. Many are widely available, but there were a few new ones, including a *Salvia guaranitica* called Berry Blast, with berry colored blooms (obviously) and a relatively compact habit.

Bill: We saw three more interesting salvias from Jaldety—in this case *S. microphylla*—that the company has been trialing and testing for a couple of years and are now releasing for 2026—all bicolors with the same airy habit and large flowers. Peach Melba, Raspberry Melba and Strawberry Melba are Zone 7 to 9 hardy.



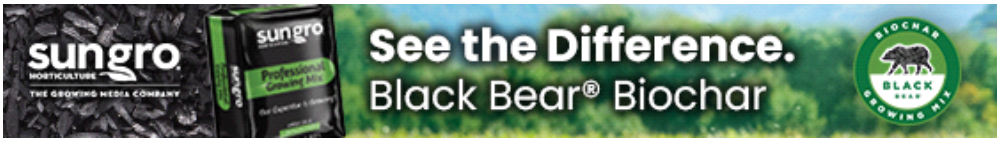
Chris: I mentioned succulents ... Jaldety has a couple of new delosperma with deep red and deep purple foliage and flowers. Desert Dancer Red and Desert Dancer Purple weren't showing the deep foliage color they should have due to cooler temperatures and lower light than they like, but we were shown a picture from their catalog and they're spectacular.



And last, but not least, was a *Kalanchoe pumila* aptly named Silver for its unique, low-growing foliage. It does flower, but the foliage color is the key selling point.

Watch our video walk-through of the entire Grigg's Nursery trial **HERE.**

Okay, around the corner to our last stop of CAST 2025—Benary!



Benary IS seed! And begonias …

Bill: The Benary trial is known for being friendly and welcoming and truly has a family feel. I suppose being a 180-year-old family business lends itself to that. We were greeted by CEO Matthias Redlefsen, who shared three key take-home messages for the trial before walking us through new varieties. The first is that Benary is all about seed—focused and committed. He spoke about the reliability of seed, cutting-edge technology that leads to grower benefits and the control Benary has over inputs with more than 95% of the seed they sell produced by the company. Chris, maybe you can tell us about the other two key messages.

Chris: Take-home No 2: Entrepreneurship. As you said, they're a family owned business, meaning they're independent, quick to adapt and completely customer-focused. And lastly, but certainly not least, Benary is begonias. Venerable series like Cocktails (which literally got me into this industry more than 40 years ago) and Nonstops, introduced in 1972 and still going strong, to new breeding like BIGs and Whoppers. Bill, tell the folks about some of the newest begonias Benary is offering for 2026.

Bill: I can do that, boss. Benary showed a couple new individual colors in begonias—new Groovy Salmon Bicolor, the first two-tone color (pink and white) in their *B. boliviensis* trailing type, and Whopper Salmon Bronze Leaf for the Ball Seed exclusive series that's taller than BIG with fantastic landscape performance.



Chris: Wait! You left out this year's biggest begonia intro: A whole new series called MegaCool.

When I tell you its working name was Baby Big, you get the picture. MegaCool is a *B. semperflorens* hybrid that's only one-third the size of BIG, but with flowers just as big as BIG. Now, just because it's smaller than BIG doesn't mean you can shove it into packs; it still wants a nice pot. And their testing has shown it to be better in planters and combos than directly in beds. The series starts with four green-leafed colors (but knowing Benary, bronze foliage can't be far off).



Bill: Moving on from begonias, we spotted a couple of marigolds, a classic bedding plant we all were pleased to see. Both of these new standalones are tetraploids (resulting in strong, beefy plants) with interesting names. Mango Tango, an AAS Winner, has red and orange anemone-shaped blooms , while Milli Vanilli fades dark yellow to light yellow with a more traditional bloom structure.



Chris: I'll admit to being a bit baffled by Milli Vanilli—I was expecting something creamier and this is a buttery yellow. Still, I'll remember it!

Another iconic series from the German breeder is pentas—namely, their Grafitti series. For 2026, they've added two new colors, Deep Red and Neon Plum, bringing the series to 17 colors and two mixes. But, wow, Bill, how about the new Graffiti?! (That's an interrobang, for those who wonder what it's called if you use a question and an exclamation mark at the same time.)

Bill: We were expecting new Graffitis, but were thrilled to see a whole new type: a trailing pentas called Grafitti Falls. And this thing really trails—I mean, as soon as the stem comes up it starts bending over. What did you call it, Boss?



Chris: I said it looked like geotropism, but instead of the plant trying to grow upwards, it's being attracted to the center of the earth. Wild!

Bill: Growers will appreciate that it can be produced just like regular Graffiti, other than needing 10 to 14 additional days before it's ready to ship. Did I miss any other details, Chris?

Chris: Not much more than that it starts with one color, Rose. And that it's certainly unique! Now, will consumers dig it? We'll just have to wait and see.



Benary's petunias and more

Bill: Switching gears to petunias, Success and Boom are Benary's core series, with Success being grandiflora and Boom being multiflora and they now both come in HD (high density, like for packs and bench-run production) and TR (trailing, as in baskets) series. New for Success HD is Rose Morn. For Success TR, there are four new: Light Pink Morn, Magenta Star, Pink Morn and Rose Star. Prior to this year, Boom hadn't included a trailing version, but now there are five. These aren't pack types due to the trailing vigor, so put Red, Rose, Coral, White and Blue in bigger pots or baskets.



Chris: Hey, Bill, you know that hydrangea variety called Tabletensia, bred to be compact enough to grow in a bowl and use as a centerpiece? Rudbeckia Tablemate Gold does the same thing, but in a rudbeckia. It's genetically dwarf to stay down to maybe 8- or 10-in. tall. Do NOT apply PGRs ... unless you want them to disappear into the soil.



Bill: Something we didn't do much this year once we left the Ball Trials in Santa Paula was head outside the greenhouse to see cool-season crops. At Benary, we were happy to see some pansies and violas outside loving the mild temps. New in the Highflyer series of trailing pansies, introduced two years ago, are Violet Face, Blue Heaven (pictured) and Lemon Splash (plus an improved Yellow Red Wing.)



Also, the Admire Viola series gets a new White Pink Wing.

While I'm writing about the crops outdoors, I'll shout out a few grassy plants new to the Benary lineup. JenZ loved a lagurus called Bunny, with fuzzy plumes that can be used as a component plant or dried and popped in vases. I liked Bluey and Spiky—koleria and corynephorus grasses, respectively. Both of those will grow 2 ft. by 2 ft. in the landscape. Lastly, another component plant, although it works well as a standalone in fall programs, is ornamental millet and Benary selected a nice one with super-dark plumes and green to bronze foliage, naming it Inky.



Chris: While we were outside, I ran into my friend David Dobos from Blackmore, who pulled me over to see a display of BIG begonias. I wasn't sure what he was getting at until he pointed out the container they were in: a massive bedding plant pack that'd I'd call a 108: one per tray with eight cells. And the cells are the equivalent of 5-in. pots! Talk about a pack! Growing the large begonias in the massive tray isn't just a gimmick; David said one Northeast grower has been doing these for his landscape customers for a while. And he added that some big growers want to test the concept for their retail customers. It's a crazy idea ... but it might just work!



Bill: We can't close our Benary coverage without mentioning a big seed technology display where they showed different species coated using their BeGreen seed technology, which is environmentally friendly and developed to simplify seed sowing for growers. You'll have to watch **OUR VIDEO** to see Chris VERY closely examining the pellets melting in water.

Chris: Benary has put a lot of emphasis on seed tech over the last few years and they've gotten good at it, as well as very green at it, eliminating chemicals, microplastics and other nasties from the process while improving the quality, germination and ease of handling of their seeds—critical, since seed is what they do!



Closing time ...

Bill: It's bittersweet to write a conclusion to our coverage this year. I feel like we were really in a groove the past few days. Not that I'm tearing up or anything, Chris, because I can't wait to get home and see Jennie and the girls, but I'll miss you, Jen and Osvaldo.

Chris: I hope our passion for the industry—and our respect for each other's talents—comes through in our writing and videos. The fact that we haven't killed each other after virtually living together for five days is a bonus! Bill, remind the folks where they can find more of our coverage on social media.

Bill: Sundays are the perfect time to binge-watch YouTube videos and we have 27 of them for you! **HERE'S A LINK TO THE PLAYLIST**. And if you're scrolling **FACEBOOK** or **INSTAGRAM** @growertalksgreenprofit, go ahead and give us a like or a follow and comment on new varieties that stand out.

Thanks for hanging with us all week, and we'll be back before you know it in our regular newsletters!













See you next time!

Chris, Jen, Bill & Osvaldo



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