CAST 2026 Day 1: The Ball Companies



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TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026

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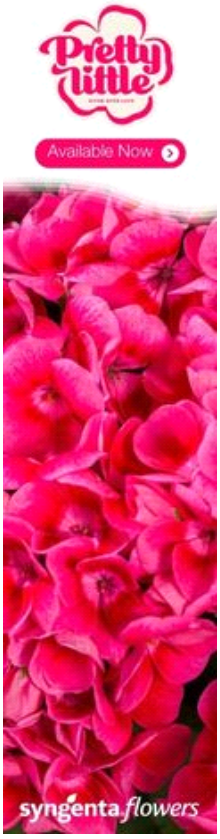
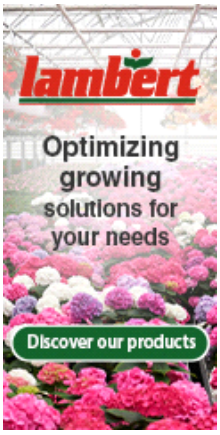








Acres of buzz from California Trials

IN THIS EDITION

The Ball Companies:
- PanAmerican Seed
- Ball FloraPlant
- Selecta One
- Darwin Perennials
- Ball exclusives from Morel





Hitting the Road Once Again!

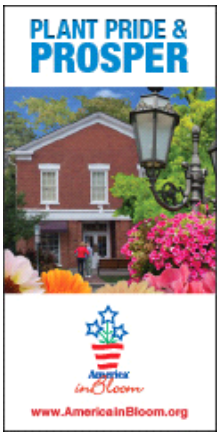
Watch the videos:
PanAmerican Seed
Ball FloraPlant
Selecta One
Darwin Perennials
Morel

Chris: Well, Bill, we're back at it again for the umpteenth time … well, technically … I can't do the math, but we first traveled together in 2005, invented this email in 2006 and were dubbed the Bobbleheads. You took some years away from Ball Publishing to dabble over at Ball Seed and now we're back together writing this thing—and without the aid of AI!

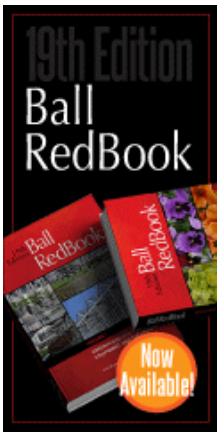
Bill: No AI. EVER. But I will say the technology has changed a lot, especially on the video side of things. Some of those old videos were pretty grainy. As for our trip West, it's my favorite work week of the year and it was funny last night at a big dinner with dozens of people, our little Bobblehead crew gravitated to each other naturally because we're actually friends, as well as coworkers. It's what makes our coverage so good, I think. And authentic.

Chris: True—no fistfights yet! But let me remind the folks how this works: We (meaning









you, me, Jen Zurko and videographer extraordinaire Osvaldo Cuevas) visit trials all day, asking probing questions, taking copious notes and photos, and shooting action-packed high-def video. We spend every night tucked in a hotel room in wine-and-chip-fueled writing and editing frenzy, then hit "send" sometime before midnight (hopefully) so you can see what we saw in almost real time. The only caveat is we can't include it all—there's just too much! We include what we feel is either most important or most interesting.

Bill: We do include A LOT, though. Which is pretty tough for some companies. Take PanAmerican Seed, for instance. I bet they had 50 new intros on display!

Chris: Fifty-two, to be precise. With all that out of the way, let's pick a few favorites, each from PanAmerican Seed, Ball's seed-breeding company. You first, Bill—beauty before age.



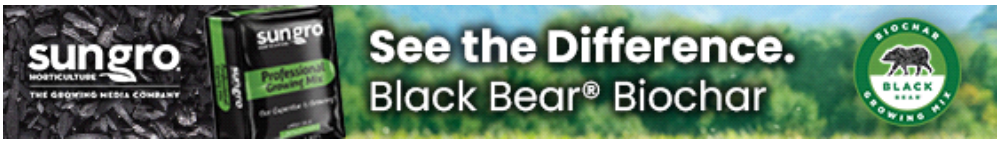
Innovations in Seed

Bill: Awesome! I appreciate that, boss. I'm going with the new Wave Petunia. I love the color, or pattern. It's an E3 Easy Wave (the latest evolution in Wave breeding) and it's called Midnight Marble. We've seen these "sky" pattern vegetative petunias and I tend to like them all, but having a "consistently inconsistent" blue-and-white Wave is next level. Like most petunias with this pattern type, the dominance of blue or white is dictated by light, temperature and even PGR timing. As we learned, the greater the DIF, the more white.



Chris: You left me their top intro—how kind! It’s an F1 seed sunflower called Always Sunny Gold. Sporting golden-yellow flowers with dark centers on tall, well-branched plants, Always Sunny is quite obviously going after the variety that established the category, Sunfinity from Syngenta. But what makes Always Sunny different? We're told it lasts longer in the garden by a couple of weeks and produces more flowers overall. And it’s 100% pollen-free. For the grower, it’s ready to sell 10 to 14 days sooner, they say. There’s no plan to brand it with fancy pots, either. It looked great in the trial; you’ll just have to try it for yourself.





More from PanAm

Bill: I'll move on through the PanAm greenhouse to a series I hadn't seen in a while, but always liked—Vinca Tattoo. It's the series with unique colors like peach and orange tones with dark eyes and other interesting patterns. New for 2027 is Boysenberry, the first new one in at least five years. This one has a white-ish center that transitions to red and purple by the edge of the flower. It's super cool and like many varieties, the color is deeper and darker in cooler temps and PanAm said to consider shading it about 20% when growing it in southern climates.



Chris: We can't talk about PanAm without mentioning impatiens because they helped save the market with the introduction of Beacon, their Impatiens Downy Mildew-resistant series. It gets an important new color, Pink, bringing the series to 11 colors and eight mixes. In addition, two colors get improved: Orange to be earlier, with denser plants and more saturated colors; and Violet, for denser plants and better color. Also new in impatiens, their Solarscape interspecific series (good for sun or shade) gets a vivid new XL Red Glow. Check out this **TIMELAPSE VIDEO** Osvaldo shot showing how Solarscape bounces back after rain.



Bill: For my third PanAm intro, I have to go with my favorite garden plant, interspecific begonias. And the OG ... DragonWing. New this year is White Bronze Leaf with very dark foliage and pure white flowers.



Another classic PanAm crop is angelonia and I think they still have the only two seed series, Serena and Serenita. Serenita is more compact, but with the same attributes as Serena. New colors for 2027 are Serena Magenta and Serenita Cherry Red.





Even More from PanAm

Chris: If there's one thing Bill and I have in common, it's a love of food. And basil is a food ... or at least it makes food better! And PanAm's new basil is a better basil. Monteverde Genovese is a traditional Genovese-style basil that has high resistance to many strains of basil downy mildew (and intermediate resistance to many others). But most important was flavor, and we can vouch for its savoriness without too much of that licorice taste. By the way, they'll be using the "Monteverde" name for a full line of disease-resistant basils of other types.



Basil inoculated with downy mildew pathogen. Disease-resistant Monteverde (right); other variety (left).

Bill: I can't move on from PanAm without giving one more shout out. As we walked into the trial past the outdoor display area, I noticed a huge gold trophy on our way into the barn to drop off our stuff. Initially, I assumed it was for us and our amazing daily coverage of the trials. It was not. Instead, it was full of bright yellow osteospermum! New Akila Sunshine Yellow is as vivid as they get and adds to this seed series that's known for its compactness no-pinch production and excellent uniformity.



Chris: If you're shouting out, I'll also make one more mention ... no, two: African Marigold

Lanna Lace is a vanilla-colored marigold that replaces—yes, Vanilla, which was introduced many years ago, but which had serious production issues. Lanna is the name of the place it was bred in Thailand.



And a favorite of mine: Tuberous Begonia Marquee, a collection of five impressive begonias with massive flowers. Those of you who've been around will remember the AmeriHybrids from Golden State Bulb Company. PanAm acquired the seed, sorted through the best of the best, and introduced four of them: Ruffled Yellow, Ruffled Red, Ruffled Coral Salmon and Lace Pink; and from their own breeding, Ruffled White. Excellent for grower-retailers and local growers because these are too big and delicate to ship very far.



For all these and more, check out our stunning **VIDEO**!

Alright, Bill, on to some vegetative varieties.



Vegetative Drama

Bill: Let’s do it! PanAmerican Seed always fills one entire greenhouse, leaving the second greenhouse for vegetative companies Ball FloraPlant and Selecta One to fill with color. Ball FloraPlant did not disappoint and one of the dominant colors was yellow. We started our tour looking at Petunia NewBee, which is a cold-tolerant alternative to the very popular Bee’s Knees. BFP told us it’s an excellent choice for early season programs and has a bit more spreading vigor than its counterpart.



Chris: Right next to the NewBee and Bee's Knees display was a new crop for Ball FloraPlant, fuchsia. I love 'em, although being in Florida, I don't get to enjoy them. BFP's new line features a really robust standalone called Blue Radiance, with red and violet flowers; and a somewhat smaller one called Dollarita Rose Violet. Bringing up the compact end is Bellinto, a line from Selecta with four colors—so there's a size for everyone.



Bill: Across from the NewBee display were some more yellow blooms that were pretty dramatic in a large vignette complete with bowls of citrus fruit. Unfortunately, the fruit was styrofoam ... but perfect for juggling (as you'll see if you watch our video).

Chris: You found out the hard way about that fruit. I told you it couldn't be real—it was too perfect!



More Vegetative Drama

Bill: The new varieties on display were BFP's first forays into petchoa, CitraNova Lemon Zest and CitraNova Limone. Limone is deep yellow and Lemon Zest is white with a yellow center. Petchoas are known for being super durable and tolerant of a range of environmental conditions, and these look like solid starts to a future series from BFP.



Chris: I'll wrap up BFP with a brazen new scaevola series called Blazen—I think named for its fast speed in propagation—a week faster than the competition. And it's a week earlier to finish. The plants are big, but mounded, with a tight cover of large flowers. It looks good enough to grow as mono baskets. Blazen has the requisite Blue and White; Pink is in the works. There's also a subseries called Blazen Compact that's about 30% smaller and with smaller flowers. It starts with Blue.



See these and loads more in our **BFP VIDEO**.

Now, on to more vegetative annuals from Selecta One.



Vegetatively Speaking ...

Bill: For the first time that I can remember, two distinctly different companies (Ball FloraPlant and Selecta One) merged together in a spring trials display to convey an overarching message—in this case, it was that between BFP and Selecta, your calibrachoa needs are covered. On the Selecta side was the MiniFamous series, with new intros in Uno (medium, compact) and Neo (more mounding). Neo adds Amethyst Flash and Uno adds Purple Strike, which is very cool with yellow streaks and stars through the purple flowers.



Chris: As a tropicals guy, I was immediately drawn to the new mandevillas at Selecta. The Divina collection has two subseries: MegaFlora is as named: big and bold plants with lots of branching to produce big, bold flowers. It's ideal for gallon pots or larger and starts with Red and Neon Pink. Then there's Divina Compact, a bush-type with strong branching for lots of flowers in Pink, Red and White. Grow this one in quarts or gallons.



Bill: Speaking of osteospermum (seriously ... you really should watch our videos to get the joke), Selecta dropped three of them. New for the FlowerPower Compact series is White Amethyst and for the newer FlowerPower Petite series is a really nice Yellow. Lastly, adding to the 4D series is Orange, which could be pretty interesting for fall programs, as well as early spring. Remember, 4Ds are the ones that have huge flower centers and overlapping petals that literally cannot close up, so they look beautiful 24/7.



See these osteos and everything else from Selecta in our **VIDEO**.

Now it’s perennials time, boss!



Perennial Mainstays & Breakthroughs

Chris: It’s easy to pick my favorite intro from Darwin Perennials: the new DayScape Hemerocallis, a new genus for Darwin. This is a collection of nine daylilies bred by Greg Goff from Le Petit Jardin in Micanopy, Florida. Their key attribute? Rust resistance. That, and long-lasting flowers. Oh, and they're daylength neutral, early to flower, self-cleaning and continuous-blooming. The nine colors are excellent. Darwin said they’re hardy from Zones 5a to 9b, so I’ll be trying these in my Orlando garden!



Bill: Darwin always brings solid intros to the table in California and a couple more examples of this are the new Spanish Lavender Butterfly Garden series launching with two colors—Plum Perfect (a deep purple cone/pineapple) and Poppin' Pink (a super-unique color for *L. stoechas*). The Darwin guys told us these are very grower-friendly, ship well and available as URCs and callused cuttings.



When we saw the new Helianthemum SunBurst series early in the day, all the bright Pink, Rose and White flowers were happy and open. When we went back to shoot video late in the day, they were closed up. But it's a classic garden plant (commonly called rock rose) and

a heat lover that has a ton of uses and just might be perfect for a new generation of gardeners.

Chris: You mentioned mainstays in the headline; certainly, ornamental grasses fit that category. Darwin has introduced six in two genera, *Panicum virgatum* and *Schizachyrium scoparium*. The panicum is called Dream Catcher; it gets Lightning Bolt, Tumbleweed and Smoky Rose. The schizachyrium collection is called Free Spirt; it gets Blue Arrow, Mystic Purple and Comet. Alas, they only had a couple we could see in person, but I'm sure they'll be in the Gardens at Ball for Darwin Perennials Day.



See these and more in our stellar **VIDEO**.

Now our last stop at Ball—Morel!

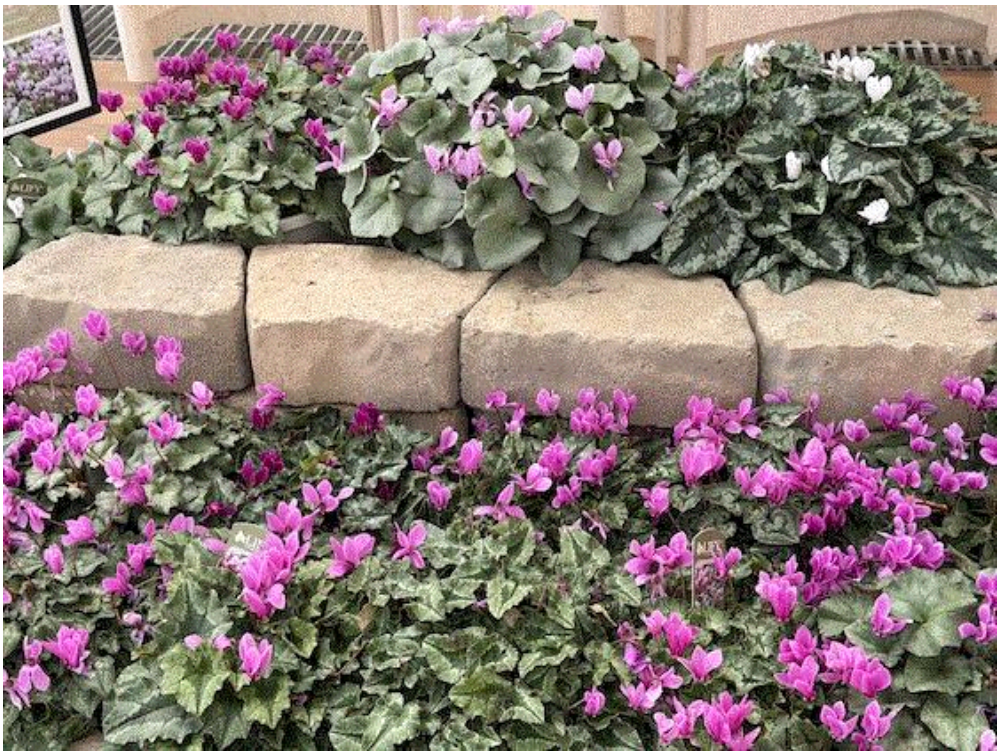


Morel: French for “cyclamen”

Bill: It’s tough to write about cyclamen. They’re much more interesting **ON VIDEO** (hint, hint), but I’ll call out a few of my favorites from the Morel exhibit—all mini types, which they call Metis. Rosy Glow is a standard type with Japanese cherry blossom coloration and appearance, and a unique red stripe inside of some of the blooms. Then Metis Clochette Salmon is a mini with fringed blooms with somewhat of a bell shape (clochette mean “small bell” in French). Third is Metis Indiaka, Morel’s bicolor type, which adds Magenta.



Chris: As an indoor potted plant, nothing lasts longer than cyclamen! But there are also outdoor hardy perennial cyclamen in something like 26 species and Morel is offering two of them, which they call “botanical types." Lify is a *C. hederifolium*, while Koumy is a *C. coum* selection. They can open up a whole new world of cyclamen fun to you perennial growers.



Check out these and more in our Morel video **HERE**.



Summing Up the Day

Bill: When we were drinking coffee this morning and game-planning our day, we challenged ourselves to be efficient, professional and still have plenty of fun. I think we nailed it. It was fun, wasn't it, boss?

Chris: Well, as I said earlier, we haven't killed each other yet. But, yes, you are correct—we're having more fun than four semi-talented people should be allowed to! Alrighty, folks, thanks for sticking on this far in Day 1. Tomorrow, we have two stops—our traditional visit to Green Fuse Botanicals up among the lemon groves in Somis, and then the new home of Benary at Por La Mar Nursery in Santa Barbara. Can't wait to see how they've handled the move from their former home in Watsonville. Any last words for the folks, Bill?

Bill: I definitely have some last words. Follow us on Instagram (@GrowerTalksGreenProfit) and **FACEBOOK** for tons of photos and video antics. And be sure to subscribe to our **YOUTUBE** channel so you never miss a video.

Chris: Spoken like the social media specialist that you are! See y'all tomorrow!



See you next time!

Chris, Jen, Bill & Osvaldo



Chris Beytes
Editor-in-Chief
GrowerTalks/Green Profit

Jen Zurko
Editor
GrowerTalks/Green Profit

Bill Calkins
Senior Editor/Digital Editor
GrowerTalks/Green Profit

Osvaldo Cuevas
Video Producer
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