# CAST 2026 Day 2: Green Fuse (6 Companies) & Benary




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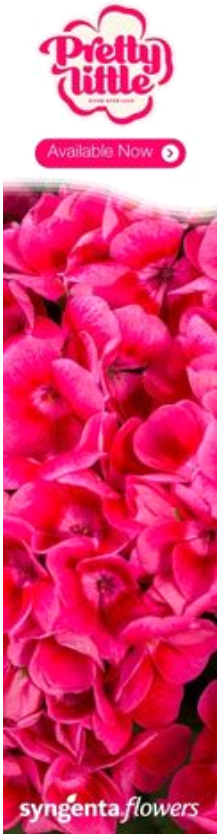
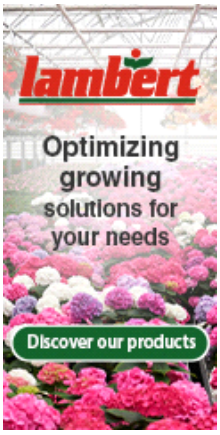





# Acres of buzz from California Trials

IN THIS EDITION

The Green Fuse Grove:
- Green Fuse
- Westhoff
- Beekenkamp
- Hem Genetics
- Schoneveld
- Firefly Petunia

Benary







## Day 2 Begins …

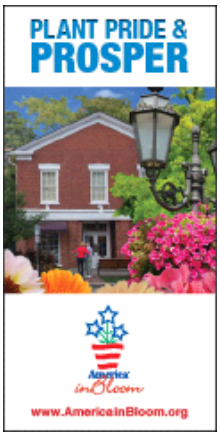
**Watch the videos:**

**Green Fuse Botanicals**
**Westhoff**
**Beekenkamp**
**Hem Genetics**
**Light.Bio/Rooted in Solutions**
**Benary**










**Bill:** Chris, it occurred to me this morning that we got into the Spring Trials groove pretty quickly yesterday and the resulting newsletter and **VIDEOS** were as solid as ever. I woke up this morning rarin' to go—which is good because it's an action-packed day, with even more companies to cover than yesterday.

**Chris:** Action-packed, yes ... but it's not like what we do is grueling. Looking at flowers and writing about them is a piece of cake compared to our readers, who have to grow and sell them for a living. I tried that—now THAT is hard work!

**Bill:** Better you than me, boss. I spent many years working at a feed store, garden center and nursery, and although it was hard work, I really enjoyed it and learned a lot about a lot.

**Chris:** Alright, enough preliminary banter—let me dive right into the first stop of the day, Green Fuse Botanicals. They are the host for six companies (plus themselves, of course) at a pretty greenhouse located up in the hills above Somis amongst the lemon groves.
Here we'll cover Green Fuse, Westhoff, Beekenkamp, Hem Genetics, Schoneveld and Light.Bio (the marketing firm behind Firefly Petunia).

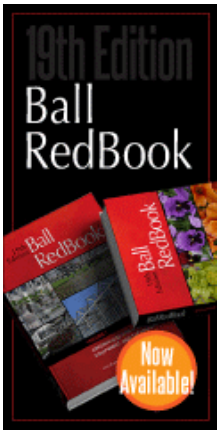



## Business in the Front, Party in the Back!

**Bill:** I love the whole vibe at Green Fuse because they're obviously super-professional and experienced breeders, but they always seem to be having fun and we can be guaranteed to see at least one wild and crazy new introduction. Where do you want to start?

**Chris:** I suspect you'll be covering the "wild and crazy," so I'll start with something tried and true: tradescantia. There's no more classic and easy foliage plant. Two years year, Green Fuse




introduced their first, Pistachio White, with a clean, stable green-and-white variegation. This year, we get Pistachio Pink, which has the more traditional green, purple and white coloration. Because it starts from tissue culture, the variegation remains clean and consistent instead of reverting back to plain green. With so many tradescantia colors available, I hope we'll see more.



**Bill:** Another new trailing plant was right next to the tradescantia—an ipomoea. But not just any sweet potato vine, a white foliage type! Jim told us that some growers and brokers had already commented that new Sweet Georgia White Flash could be an ivy or pothos replacement or used as a normal ipomoea would in combos. The foliage is small and the plant habit looked more compact than other Sweet Georgias, but it definitely trails as you'd expect.

**Chris:** I'm not quite sure it would hold up in low light like an English ivy, but it sure looked like one!

But now for a blooming plant: Pentas Phenom. Phenom was introduced last year as a vegetative series with interesting traits not found in seed pentas, like star patterns and double flowers. The series started with four colors. This year they add two more that certainly fit that category: Phenom Blue and Phenom Double Blue. Both are "horticultural blue"—meaning mauve. But they're certainly not red or white! Alas, they were just a bit too late for us to see the blooms fully open to get the full effect of the color or the doubleness.

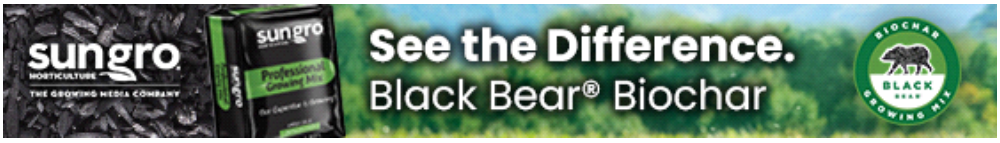


**Bill:** As I mentioned above, we were expecting something crazy from Green Fuse … and, boy, did we see it: Monardella. Discovered growing from a crack in a rock formation in Utah and cleaned up over time, it looks like a great pollinator plant, is clearly tough based on its native habitat and launches with two colors—Deep Red and Orange.



**Chris:** The Monardella is interesting, but it's not for everybody—it'll be best for the western U.S. where it's hot and dry.

Check it out (along with all the others) in our **VIDEO**.




## Getting Crazy with Flowers

**Chris:** Continuing with Bill's "crazy" theme, we made the long hike (about 100 ft.) from the Green Fuse greenhouse to the Westhoff tent, where we were shown crazy petunias and loco calibrachoas—and given a strong grower message, too. Bill, explain ...

**Bill:** As you'll see in our **VIDEO**, we were surprised to see a rack of plants and a clear production message front and center at Westhoff. When Christian Westhoff toured us through his trial, he explained that they not only breed many calibrachoa, but they're finished growers of them, as well, and sometimes they get to see how they hold up in the greenhouse when they can't be shipped on time due to weather or what-have-you. That enabled them to see just which varieties hold up better than others when shipping is delayed and they've segregated that dozen or so out as excellent to grow if that's an issue for you.




**Chris:** Speaking of calibrachoas, three intros include Eyecatcher Plum (Eyecatchers have dark eyes), Calitastic Romeo Pink (Calitastic are early and uniform) and Caliloco Tiger, an orange flower with a dark eye (Caliloco are the equivalent of Crazytunias—interesting colors). Speaking of Crazytunias, Bill, they're often our favorites just because they're so unusual, eh?

**Bill:** Walking into the trial, we were talking about the wild Crazytunia colors we've seen from Westhoff over the years and new for 2027 are four new ones. Pink Zebra is pink with white stripes, Skookum Star is red and white, Buttercream Blush is an interesting yellow and pink pattern, and High Five is magenta with a yellow edge.

**Chris:** By the way, Bill, do you know what "skookum" means?

**Bill:** We were told it's something Canadian?

**Chris:** We also guessed that from the bright red color ... but, yes, "skookum" is a Pacific Northwest word that means "strong, sturdy, excellent or powerful." Like, "That's a skookum truck." Or "She did a skookum job."

**Bill:** We learn something new every day! But back to the new varieties—also new in Westhoff's petunia range is a double called Double Stuff Soft Rose and Disco Ball Black, which brings a really dark purple color to the sky/polka dot color pattern of roundy-moundy petunias.

**Chris:** And don't forget the wildest Westhoff petunia of them all for 2027! Frogger White! I mean, who would be crazy enough to name a petunia Frogger other than Westhoff. It's a green-and-white petunia—the fact that they named it Frogger White implies there may eventually be a Frogger Pink, Frogger Rose, Frogger ... well, who knows?




## New Series & Colors

**Bill:** Every tent at the Green Fuse stop is unique—very much a reflection of our industry! At Beekenkamp, we tend to find complete series bred for uniformity and big production numbers. We always love their dahlias and you can tell from our **VIDEO** that we enjoy the whole range from this Dutch breeding company. Just inside the entry was a new series that I believe is the first calibrachoa introduced by Beekenkamp—Oasis. The Oasis series is a standard, versatile type for 4- to 10-in. pots, launching with six colors.



**Chris:** Something NOT new for Beekenkamp is dahlias—they've got dozens of colors in multiple

collections, all of which fall under the LaBella name. Most intriguing of their intros is the LaBella Grande Chocolate series—four colors (Rose, Apricot, Amber and Red) with deep, deep bronzy-green foliage. It should do well; Chocolate Rose was chosen as the favorite plant in Beekenkamp's trial garden during last year's Flower Trials, and it also won an award at the Horticultural Trades Association Plant Show in England.



**Bill:** There are a few new colors for the Petunia Tea series coming to market in 2027. This is the weather-tolerant and versatile series for 4-in. pots up to hanging baskets. Rosette Blend, Lilac Sun and Rosy Sun are all fresh new colors for the series.

**Chris:** While Beekenkamp is rapidly expanding its catalog with lines like calibrachoa, the breeder may still be best known for its begonias, all of which fall under the Dreams name. New in the Dreams Chloe collection is White Blush. Chloe is a collection of interspecific begonias with great heat tolerance and strong outdoor performance. White Blush looks like a hellebore, with soft white flowers and pink undersides.







## New in Seed

**Bill:** Another company that's been exhibiting at the Green Fuse location for quite a few years is Hem Genetics, a seed breeding company known for some big core series and an equal number of unique and niche crops. They're strong in dianthus and known by many for the Diana series. A newer range that's more genetically compact than Diana, but still has the same quality and flower size, is Divinity. These require no PGRs and new in the series for 2027 are Radiant Raspberry Red and Radiant Scarlet Frost, both with bicolor blooms with white fringed edges. Check out our **VIDEO** from Hem to see them up close and personal.



Another new dianthus is Supra Pink Picotee, which fits the larger spec of the series of interspecifics, with excellent heat tolerance and longer bloom times. There's an AAS winner in the series (Cherry Picotee), so you can be assured it's a solid plant for any region.

**Chris:** You know, it's funny—Hem breeds for natural compactness in all their varieties (no PGRs needed!) and then they introduce a digitalis that's a couple of feet tall! But to be fair, that IS compact compared to the ordinary biennial. The DiBella series, soft-launched last year, features four extremely uniform colors. It's well-branched and floriferous, but most importantly, there's plenty of seed in the bag! And that seed has a germ percentage of 95%.




**Bill:** A few more new intros we saw at Hem included the first star patterns in their Mambo and Limbo Petunia series—Limbo (grandiflora) gets Red Star, while Mambo (multiflora) adds Rose Star. As Chris said, they're all bred to be naturally compact with no need for PGRs.




Last, but not least, is a new perennial coreopsis called Sun Globe Gold that looked to be really well branched, with ruffled double yellow flowers. I liked it a lot and it's first-year flowering, which is an added bonus.

Check these and more out in our **VIDEO**.




## A Hot New Color

**Chris:** There are a few cyclamen specialists along the trial trail—we visited with France's Morel yesterday and today we got to see Schoneveld from Holland. Their Super Serie Cyclamen are widely used in Europe and noted for their uniformity, compactness and predictability. And also innovation—like the first blue cyclamen, which they call Dragon. So we were curious what we might see this year.



**Bill:** The big new intro in the spotlight is called Sweet Lips—it's a medium-spec cyclamen with beautiful two-tone pink flowers that transition from dark pink to white edges. A midi size, it'll be excellent in 4- or 6-in pots. And it likes cool weather, so it's well suited to be finished for Valentine's Day—one of the key reasons for its name.



## The Future is Bright!

**Chris:** To be honest, we thought we'd be skipping the Firefly Petunia display at Green Fuse because we've written about the glow-in-the-dark petunia at length. But doggone if they didn't surprise us! They've developed three collections of Firefly: The Twilight Collection (upright, compact, mounding); the Moonlight Collection (big, vigorous, good for hanging baskets); and the Nightlight Collection (glows even brighter, for home and gift use. And yes, even indoors, they say).

**Bill:** I love seeing an insane new innovation come to market without necessarily following the traditional channels our industry seems to always adhere to. Firefly is fantastic because shoppers love it and it's sure to generate a phenomenal amount of attention. It's a plant that shatters all barriers. Yes, the first introduction (Firefly, the OG) was not the greatest petunia. But it was definitely the first one that glowed and that was amazing. We saw the next generation (still white and now the anchor of the Twilight collection) and it definitely looks like a much more modern petunia.



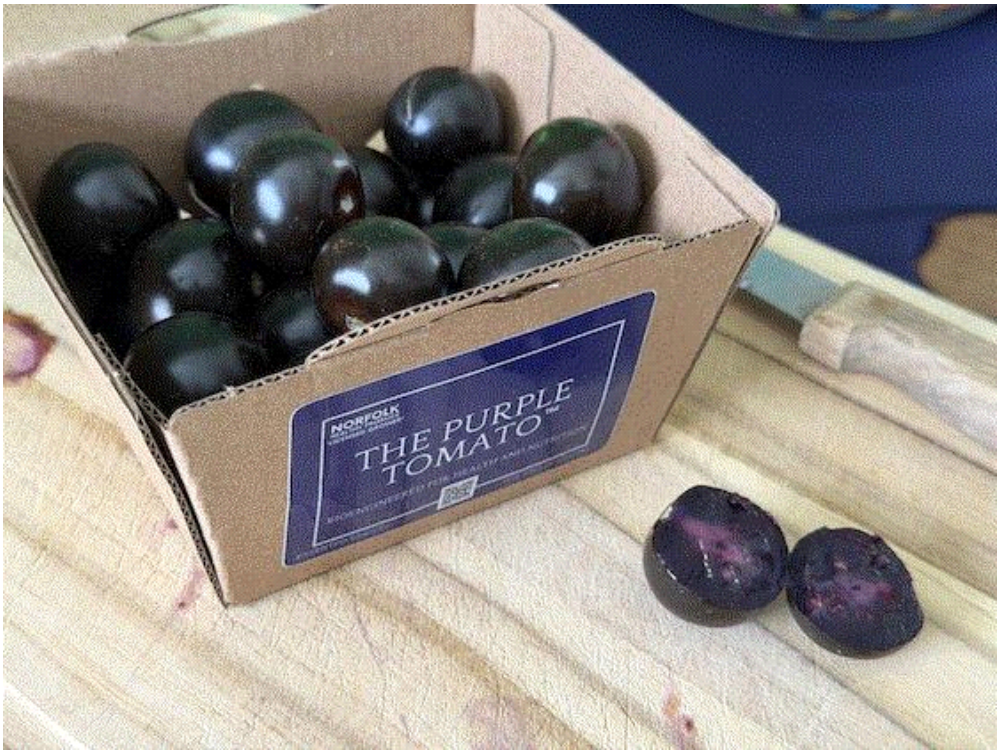
Then there were two more collections displayed, all glowing as strong or stronger as the original. Moonlight, which as Chris said is a much more vigorous and larger landscape or basket type, launched for 2027 with two colors—Pink and Pink Bicolor.

And Nightlight (white), which we heard is even brighter than the original, but much more compact and positioned as small, desktop gift plants.

I was doing a bit of research and found out that Moonlight Pink and Pink Bicolor (sold as Pink & White) are actually available for purchase now! **CHECK THEM OUT**.

**Chris:** While it was great to see the new Pink and Pink Bicolor adding some pizzazz to the line, don't get excited and think they actually GLOW pink ... they glow just like the regular Firefly ... if you can call Firefly "regular"!

I should mention the players involved in Firefly. Light.Bio is the scientists who developed the plant. Raker-Robertas is the producer of the plants. And a company called Rooted in Solutions is doing marketing and distribution. And to that end, they showed another plant—a tomato! A GMO cherry tomato called Purple Empress. Its deep, deep purple color comes from a snapdragon gene, they say, and it has as much antioxidants as blueberries. You should be able to get Purple Empress to add to your garden veggie plant line.




Watch the **VIDEO** to see what's new!




## New Location, Same Great Experience

**Bill:** I always look forward to the Benary stop because they've been doing spring trials a long time and seem to work hard every year to maintain the original mission: showcasing new introductions and fostering a welcoming, social vibe that feels like family. That sounds melodramatic, but I'll stand by it. Don't you agree, Chris?




**Tish and Erin with their new tenant, Benary's Matthias Redleffsen.**

**Chris:** I won't disagree and nor will anyone else—great people, great displays, great food ... in fact, I also won't deny that we timed our visit for lunch (it was Taco Tuesday). The new home, Por La Mar Nursery, was welcoming, too. In fact, they had their own display where I met one of the owners, Sales & Marketing Manager Erin Caird and Corporate Sales Specialist Tish Martinez. Tish told me Por La Mar breeds roses, hydrangeas and zygocactus, and grows 300 varieties of tropicals among other things. Impressive! Oh, they also own Glad-A-Way Gardens, a 500-acre cut gladiolus farm. Fascinating!




## Pentas, Begonias, Petunias … Oh, My!

**Bill:** It's definitely a nice new location for Benary, who showed us some equally cool new varieties like a HUGE new series of pentas called Street Art. Displayed in a big municipal-sized planter, I thought the plant habit was impressive, especially when compared side by side with their more traditional pentas, Graffiti. It would also make a great landscape plant and fill plenty of space with tons of color. The series launches with four colors: Red, White, Rose and ... drum roll, please ... BLUE! Seriously, the first blue pentas from seed. Admittedly, it's more of a "horticultural blue," (mauve), but it definitely created a nice red, white and blue combo planter.




And while I'm talking pentas, I'll call out an experimental Grafitti: Lavender Blue. Benary put a lot of intention into re-sorting their Graffiti lineup a couple years ago to create excellent uniformity across all colors, so I'm guessing when the new color becomes commercial in a year or so, it'll fit the spec and add a really unique color to the venerable series.

**Chris:** Benary IS begonias, so we always expect a few new ones, such as one with a crazy name: Wookie. A Wookie is a hairy creature from "Star Wars"; Wookie Begonia is a hairy hybrid begonia. Well, not hairy, but pubescent. There's some speculation (and testing) to see if it discourages deer. Stay tuned! Wookie starts with White Splash and Pink Splash.




The large *semperflorens* series BIG gets a Soft Pink Bronze Leaf—the first Soft Pink color in their begonias. And Nonstop gets a collection called Select Mix that is the most uniform in habit and timing for bench-run growing.

Okay, Bill—per your request, I left you your favorite.

**Bill:** I appreciate you leaving the new Whopper for me because you know I love them. Still a Ball Seed exclusive (like they have been from Day One), new Rose Espresso has the darkest—almost black—foliage I've seen in a landscape type, interspecific begonia. It is absolutely stunning! Seriously, check out photos on our social media pages and watch the **VIDEO** because this is one you have to see.



**Chris:** I'd say the same about Lobelia Masterpiece Sky Blue—we have to see it ... because they didn't have it; it was the only crop failure of the whole trial. It's a light blue version of Masterpiece Blue with Eye, the first F1 seed lobelia introduced last year. The large poster of it looks fine, though; we're sure it's a top variety.

**Bill:** I'll wrap up Benary, and our trial coverage for the day, with a couple new multiflora petunias in their BOOM! TR (trailing) series—Lavender and Purple.




Alright, Boss, where are we off to tomorrow?



## Day 2 is a Wrap and Day 3 is a Big One!

**Chris:** Day 3 is where we actually do work for a living. Our first stop, the Santa Barbara Polo Club, is now home to about a dozen companies, all of whom will be fighting for our attention. If we give each one 30 minutes, that's six hours ... plus we have to shoot video at each one! Gads! Then a long drive to Stop 2, Dümmen Orange, which will be much more relaxed. One company we can handle! And it's at a winery, which means we won't go thirsty.

**Bill:** Hey, don't hit send yet, Chris! I need to remind our dear readers that beyond the daily e-news and amazing videos, we're posting a ton of content on social media—**FACEBOOK** and Instagram **@GrowerTalksGreenProfit**—and it's everything from plant pics and trial vignettes to candid shots of Bobbleheads in action and POV videos shot from my Meta glasses. Check it out and we shall talk to you tomorrow!




See you next time!

Chris, Jen, Bill & Osvaldo



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