

# Spring Trials Day One, with Chris & Ellen, the Bobbleheads

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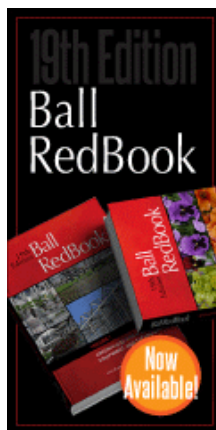
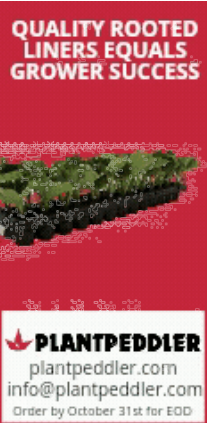
IN THIS EDITION

The Ball family of companies:  
Ball FloraPlant  
Ball Ingenuity  
Burpee  
Darwin Perennials  
Kieft Seed  
Morel

30 YEARS wave

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## Chris and Ellen do it again

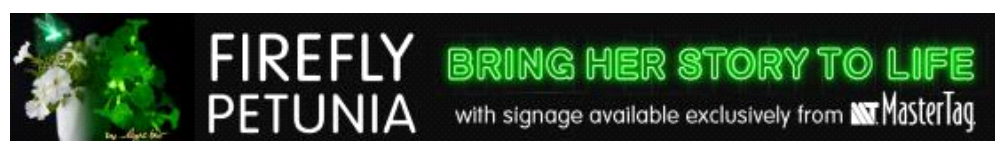
**Chris:** Hey, Ellen! (I've been waiting a year to say that.)

**Ellen:** Hey, Chris! (I can't believe we're already doing this again.)

**Chris:** Hey there, everybody. The Bobbleheads are back on the road again, covering this year's California Spring Trials from top to bottom ... actually, bottom to top, starting in Santa Paula and finishing up in Watsonville. Sixteen locations and 60 companies ... and that's counting Ball's nine companies/brands as one. It's gonna be six full days of flowers, plants and writing.

**Ellen:** Yikes. That's a lot. Well, we better get moving, eh? Lots to cover, so let's make this intro brief. This is what you need to know, reader: You'll be finding us in your inbox each morning—today and for the next five mornings—recapping what we've seen at the previous day's stops. How we present it each day depends on how we're feeling when we write it. But this we promise: It's all good stuff and all the highlights you'll need to know.

**Chris:** It certainly won't be all we saw. That's the challenge of Trials: We see a thousand new and improved items, and only have time and space to share a tithe of it. So we try to give you a good diverse selection of stuff. Plus, we've got videos, thanks to videographer extraordinaire Jen Zurko. But as you say, enough intro. Let's dive in. Today, we hit the Ball family of companies. What say we each take one, alternating in no particular order, until we reach the end?



## Burpee

**Ellen:** Don't mind if I do. Okay, let me start with ... well, I like veggies, so I'll start with Burpee. First off, and non-vegetable related, Burpee has a new look. Check it out:



It's both retro (note the old-school logo) and modern (see all that white space) with trending colors that differentiate Burpee's categories (Amazing, Space Savers, Foodie). It's all in an effort



to be more appealing to consumers.

Speaking of categories, we were shown a few new varieties in each. Some of the highlights include a new tomato, Gladiator, a sauce tomato bred to tolerate a whole range of soil conditions, such as those that lead to blossom end rot. And an awesome shishito pepper, Dragon Roll. These are traditionally a Japanese bar snack that are blistered and salted. One in 10 of these peppers are hot. Chris calls it Russian roulette when you eat them. And it's true—we tried them!

One last highlight is their new sleeved potted fresh herbs, designed to be sold in a fresh market setting like a grocery or farmers market. Ya know, it's a good idea and a great way into a market with opportunity.



We've got all the video highlights [HERE](#).



**A Sweet Treat**



## Ball FloraPlant

**Chris:** They said they've got a few growers testing the fresh herb concept. If you're selling fresh potted herbs, you might want to look at their varieties and POP.

Now, let me hit one of Ball's vegetative breeding companies, Ball FloraPlant. The first thing we were shown was Conga Calibrachoa, their compact calibrachoa series. It gains, what, Ellen, seven new colors? For 12 total? The additions include mainstream colors like Red and Dark Blue, plus some bicolors (under the "Kiss" name), like Sweet Kiss and Orange Kiss. They say it's now the biggest compact calibrachoa series on the market.

Salvia Mystic Spires gets a new "little sister" you might say, called Salvia Mysty, which is about 30% smaller than Mystic Spires. With its more controlled habit, it's great for summer combinations.



And speaking of spires, here's a tall plant for you: Ipomoea SolarTower. You know their SolarPower series? Well, think climbing sweet potato vine and you get the idea of SolarTower. It's great for climbing trellises and obelisks. Comes in two colors, Lime and Black.

Lastly, as a former Florida grower, I really admired Lantana Bloomify, which has been verified as sterile by the University of Florida. That means it doesn't set seed, so it stays in bloom all summer long. And if lantana gets classified as invasive anyplace, this one will get around that. There are two colors in the series: Bloomify Red and Bloomify Rose.

Take a gander at it all [HERE](#).



## Darwin Perennials

**Ellen:** I'll take Darwin Perennials, Ball's vegetative perennial company. They had a brand new series of armeria called Dreameria. They say it's a "breeding breakthrough." Why? Because Dreameria is a season-long bloomer. Its ball-shaped flowers, held on compact stems, look a bit like a small allium, but rather than having a four-week bloom time like an allium, it has a four-month bloom time. Two varieties in Dreameria: the lavender-colored Sweet Dreams and pink Daydream.





They also have a new landscape dianthus, Mountain Frost, with six colors—five of them single flowers and one, called Pink PomPom, a double. Also new is Deep Rose in the Marvel series of *Salvia nemerosa*, and the sterile and compact Snowsation Iberis. It's pretty and as white as newly fallen snow!

See it all [HERE!](#)



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## PanAmerican Seed

**Chris:** The Ball trial is held at PanAmerican Seed, so it's only right we give PAS some love, starting with a new pentas series called Lucky Star. Its breeder, Jason Jandrew, told us his goal was to produce a compact pentas that's not a me-too. He seems to have achieved that. Lucky Star offers three benefits over the competition: 1) It's four to six days faster to finish than the competitors; 2) its secondary flowers come on fast, which gives the plant continuous color; and 3) there are some good, bright colors, especially Violet, which is both deep and vivid. Oh, and they showed some actual pack comparisons of Lucky Star vs. the competition—in other words, pack trials! Ha!



PAS has a new combo recipe program called Plug & Play, which features about 60 recipes of seed varieties that have been extensively tested to “play well together” throughout their lives, from greenhouse to retail to the end consumer. In fact, that’s the key to the program: Everything has been extensively trialed here and in Europe, by the breeder and by growers. Now, they’re just recipes, plus growing tips. No “kits” of plugs. You or your sales rep just order the varieties you need to create the recipes. They include Wave Petunias, Fuseable multi-seed pellets and lots of PAS varieties.

Lastly, I’m going to mention two intros that struck me with their interesting colors. First is osteospermum Akila Grand Canyon Mixture, named for the rich colors of the Grand Canyon you’d see at sunset. This is a blend of naturally occurring shades from cream and orange to pink and purple. Germ is 5% higher than other series, they say.

We recorded all the highlights, of course. Here they **ARE**.





## Ball Ingenuity

**Ellen:** Ball Ingenuity is Ball Horticultural's third-party genetics arm. They scour the world for genetics that become exclusive to Ball, and boy, do they find some good stuff. Lately, they've been focusing on edibles, which they see as a growth market. Last year's edible was SweetKiss strawberry. This year's is a white blackberry called Polarberry. Same flavor as a blackberry, but a white-fruited version.



Other new varieties are a lime-green leafed, DragonWing-type begonia called Canary Wings; Cannova Bronze Orange Canna, a Twisted Yellow Celosia, three improvements to the Whopper Begonia and the Bud to Blossom Orchid Program.

Orchids? At Ball? That's right. These are orchids that are pre-initiated at 3H Farms in Texas. Great for grower-retailers, these can be ordered in small quantities of 36 to 50 plants, depending on size, each box with five to six different sizes. Buy them in, put them on the bench, keep them under 60% shade with high humidity, and in 10 to 12 weeks you've got a flowering orchid to sell. It sounds like a great deal, doesn't it, Chris?



We've got [VIDEO](#) on all of this, too!

## Morel

**Chris:** When you consider it takes almost a year to grow an orchid, and they do most of the work for you, yes. You just put it in a decorative pot and market it.

Speaking of decorative pots, I'll cover Morel, which is Ball's exclusive potted cyclamen breeder. Their new intros range from tiny to large. On the tiny side is the Smartiz series, suited for 2.5- to 4-cm. pots. Smartiz gets Morel's Fantasia coloration, which is a white edge on the flowers. There are two Fantasias, Magenta and Purple. These would be great for fairy gardens or as gift plants.

At the large end is the Halios series, suited for 5 in. to 6.5 in. pots. Halios gets a color pattern I've never seen before: Funflame. The flower petals are sort of flame-shaped, with a gentle fade from white upward to Magenta, with the same Magenta hue at the bottom of the flower.

Wanna see what see saw? We've got it [HERE](#).





## Star Roses and Plants

**Ellen:** Completely new at the Ball stop this year is Star Roses & Plants, purchased by Ball in 2015. Also new at Trials is the first showing of Bushel and Berry, formerly known as the BrazelBerry collection. These are small-sized fruiting bushes appropriate for today's smaller gardens and patios. With the name change to Bushel and Berry, they've also done a design change. What does that pot look like? Yep, a pint box from when you did U-Pick berries when you were a kid. Smart way to go retro.



Also new are three Knock Out Roses—their first introductions in eight years!—Peachy, Coral

and White. These do have regions they perform best in, so be sure to check with your broker about which will work best for you. They also have a new Drift landscape rose in Lemon.

## Selecta One

**Chris:** Two companies left, Ellen. One each. You want Kieft or Selecta One.

**Ellen:** You do Selecta One, Chris. You understand the geranium story better than I do.

**Chris:** I'll boil it down: A few years back, Selecta and Ball FloraPlant combined all of their best geranium genetics into a few series. But Selecta is so strong in Europe, and with such good production in Kenya, they've decided to bring their own genetics back to North America, starting with three series: Sunrise, a green-leafed zonal; Moonlight, a dark-leafed zonal; and Marcada, an interspecific zonal/ivy that leans more towards ivy. They're good-looking plants, and seeing how Selecta One sells some 90 million cuttings in Europe, we can assume growers like them.

Another story at Selecta One is Night Sky, that well-received petunia that looks like the view through a telescope. It gets a sister, Pink Sky (pictured); both get added to the Headline petunia series. Headliner also gets several nice "swirl" colors, including Banana Cherry, Blueberry and Blackberry.



Also in petunias is a new vigorous series, Main Stage, which replaces Selecta's Famous series. Compare this one to Surfinia and Supertunias. It has 10 colors, some of which are former Famous colors.

Lastly, Ellen, how about a trailing osteospermum? Daisy Falls is a true trailing osteospermum that's gotten a "huge" reception wherever it's been trialed, we were told. It starts with three colors: White Amethyst, Pink and Purple. There are doubles in the pipeline and also yellows!

## Kieft Seed

**Ellen:** Kieft Seed! Those are Ball's perennials from seed, to clarify. From them, we've got two plants and two concepts, if you will.





First the plants: Rockin' Red Dianthus (above) is one of the richest reds I've seen in dianthus. Size-wise, it's definitely a thriller for your containers and one that blooms at a time you need a reliable, knee-height thriller—in spring. Lots of blooms on this thing and it's early to bloom, too. Then we've got a new intro, Pink, in the Bandera series, the Spanish lavender. It joins Bandera Purple.

So, how do you grow and force those perennials? Growers want to know and Kieft is letting you know with their new Perennial Forcing Guide. It's all you need to know to grow these Kieft items when you need them, especially forcing for spring and fall.

One last innovation from Kieft: Primed perennial seed. Perennial seed isn't known for having the best germination rates. Using the high-tech seed technology that belongs to parent company Ball, they've begun priming their perennial seeds, offering up to an 85% germination rate on coreopsis, the highest in the industry. This primed perennial seed is new to the market and so new species will be coming online as the months go by.

## Tomorrow ...

**Chris:** All that in just our first day. We hope we didn't overwhelm you. You feel like you just read a ton, while we know all the things we didn't get to show you. But check out our videos and watch for more coverage in the coming weeks and in *GrowerTalks* magazine.

**Ellen:** That was our first day, but we've got five more, boss. Remind me what's on the slate for tomorrow?

**Chris:** Saturday, we eat breakfast ...

**Ellen:** Naturally.

**Chris:** ... and we pop out to Green Fuse and Floranova in Santa Paula, around the corner from PanAm. Then back to Oxnard and the biggest single trial of our trip, GroLink. Fifteen companies! That's gonna be interesting. Stay tuned and we'll see you tomorrow!

**Ellen:** Bye, everybody!

Chris and Ellen

Chi Ellen

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