

California Spring Trials Day 1!

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From Spring Trials

IN THIS EDITION

Day 1
Ball Horticultural Company

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NEW E3 Easy Wave Sweet Taffy Mix Petunia

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Skyrocketing Sales



wave
PETUNIAS



Hello
Sweet Taffy

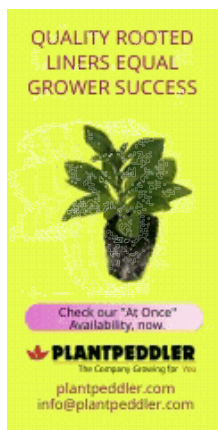
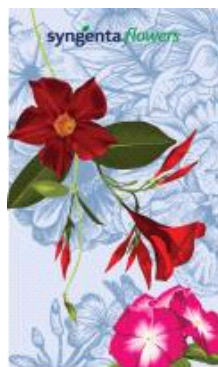


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We're Here!

Chris: Hello there, folks, and welcome to what I believe is the 10th edition of me and Ellen writing *Acres of buZZ!*, our daily report of highlights from the California Spring Trials. Ten years of me saying, "Hey, Ellen!" Pretty cool, eh, Ellen?

Ellen: That's right. Ten years, can you believe it?! And I keep coming back year after year. Must be all the pretty flowers.

Chris: Not my winning smile and enthusiastic banter?

Ellen: Ummm ... sure! Hey, what do you think about explaining what we're doing here to the uninitiated.

Chris: Dodging the question, eh? Wise! Well, okay, anyway, what is this all about? It's about the California Spring Trials, that annual event where a bunch of plant breeders and distributors introduce their new varieties for the coming season. At my count, there are 15 stops and about 60 companies. Ellen and I (and fellow editor and videographer extraordinaire Jen Zurko) hit them all, looking for the coolest, most interesting and most significant plant introductions. We can't bring you all of it—I mean, there are what, like 1,000 introductions, Ellen?

Ellen: Something like that.

Chris: Yeah, so we bring you the best of the best. What will make you money, what will pique the interest of consumers. And frankly, sometimes, what we find fun, funky or otherwise worth a mention.

Ellen: True! And sometimes it's not even a plant. It could be some pots or tags, or a cool display idea—we really like to point those out. It's all good stuff, and hopefully, it's all stuff that will make you money and make your customers successful. Wouldn't you say, Chris?

Chris: In fact, I would!

Ellen: Well then, let's start from the start! And once again, our start happened at the PanAmerican Seed facility in Santa Paula.



At PAS

Chris: Yes, it did. Friday is actually one day BEFORE the Trials officially start, but PanAm is kind enough to let us in a day early, when all the Ball Seed sales reps are there, so we can get a head start on covering this event. If they didn't, I'm not sure we could fit in every stop! It also happened to be Friday the 13th. Did you know that, Ellen?

Ellen: Yes, I did know it. I try to not acknowledge it until I know I'm safe.

Chris: You've got a few more hours of danger. If you call writing *Acres of buZZ!* risky. Anyway, I was going to propose that, since we generally find a theme for each of our six newsletters, we pick 13 of our favorite introductions from the Ball Companies. But if it will make you feel safer, we'll stick with a dozen items and avoid jinxing ourselves for the rest of the trip. Unless we cross paths with a black cat or break a mirror or something.



Easy Breezy Lobularia

Ellen: That's a splendid idea, my good fellow! I'll kick it off with the first variety we were shown, which was Easy Breezy Lobularia from Ball FloraPlant. It's the first lobularia for BFP and it's a good one, too. Heat tolerance is said to be outstanding and its habit is easy to control. Oh, and two colors—Pink and White. Hey, Chris, what did they say about tests on shipping?



Two new verbenas

Chris: Apparently, lobularia URCs can be a challenge, so BFP has done post-harvest testing on cuttings to make sure they get to you, the grower, in fine fettle. To see more from BFP, check out our video [HERE](#).

Okay, my turn for a favorite: also from Ball FloraPlant, a pair of new verbenas, interestingly called

Cadet Upright and Firehouse (you can see us wearing a police cap and fireman's helmet in the video, for some reason). Anyway, the main story is heat tolerance that rivals EnduraScape. Cadet Upright is an upright series for quarts and gallons and patio containers; Firehouse is good for hanging baskets. It replaces Aztec. Cadet has seven colors, Firehouse nine.



Canary Wings

Ellen: My turn! I'll pick Canary Wings Begonia from Ball Ingenuity. Bred by Jared Hughes, it's basically the chartreuse version of Dragon Wing, but unlike the latter, it's definitely a pure shade item. It's vegetative and here's a grower tip for you: It doesn't like mist (so don't mist it). Put it in pots no smaller than 6 in. What I love about it is how its lime green color can brighten up a shady corner. What's your next pick, Mr. Beytes?

Chris: Is chartreusey a word?

Ellen: If sounds come out of my mouth then, yes, those sounds can create a word. So, yes, it's a word. And **THIS** is a video of Canary Wings and other Ball Ingenuity offerings.



Making calibrachoa easy

Chris: Alrighty then. One of my 13 favorites isn't an introduction, per se, it's a simplification, by Selecta One. They used to have six series and subseries of calibrachoa. Confusing, right? Even for their own staff, they admitted! So they've boiled that down to two series: Uno, their early flowering, compact series; and Neo, their more traditional hanging basket series. Uno has 19 varieties, including doubles, bicolors and stars; Neo has 22 colors. There are some new ones, too, including Uno Orange, Red, White and Double PinkTastic. To see these and more from Selecta One, [HERE](#) is the video we shot.

Ellen: Okay, my next pick is Lavender Blue Spear from Kieft Seeds. A Zone 6a English lavender, Blue Spear is an easy-to-grow variety with a good habit and uniformity. At about a foot tall, it's got some relatively big and upright flower stems. It's a pretty thing, for sure.



Tattoo Vinca

Chris: Hey, Ellen! I can't believe you haven't picked Tattoo Vinca from PanAmerican Seed! But thank you for saving it for me. I'm a bit versed in this one, having seen it as a pre-introduction in Australia in December. Tattoo is basically a Pacifica Vinca, but in really interesting colors that take vinca "into a different realm," as Birdie Lenard-Fountain said. It comes in four colors: Papaya, Raspberry, Black Cherry and Tangerine. Tattoo is a great name that should catch the eye of Millennial customers. And they say they've got good POP available, too.

Ellen: Ooooooh, that's a good one. For lots more from PAS, check out our highlights video [HERE](#).

I'm gonna stick with perennials, this time picking something from Darwin: Penstemon Mini-Bells. It's compact, as its name suggests. It's also an interspecific hybrid, which means it doesn't set seed and it keeps reblooming for months on end. Two colors—Lavender Bicolor and Red—with two additional colors coming down the pike. You can see them and much more from Darwin in our video [HERE](#).



We're up to eight of 12

Chris: We're up to eight of 12, and as a former potted plant grower, I'll go with Ball Ingenuity's deal to sell pot hydrangeas from the Hydrangea Breeder's Association (HBA) of the Netherlands, via Aldershot Greenhouses of Canada, which does the trialing and also the production of the prefinished dormant liners you'll buy. These hydrangeas have loads of blooms and come in some really nice colors. If you're a potted plant grower, or want to try the category, you need to take a look at these.



Ellen: My next pick are four peppers. Two are from PanAmerican—Snackabelle, a compact and small bell pepper with thick walls, and Primero Red habanero, an early pepper with just 30% of a typical habanero's heat, but all of its umami. The other two are from Burpee—Jungle Parrot bell and Confetti, a quick-growing sweet mini bell with variegated leaves.



Susannah Ball giving us the scoop on the new Handpicked veggie varieties.

SunBuzz Sunflower

Chris: You always did like your veggies. I must say, I don't like hot food, but I'll give Primero a try. Now, number 10 of 12 for me is another potted plant, SunBuzz Sunflower from PanAmerican Seed. This looks like it could be a garden plant, but its designed to be a potted plant. An F1 hybrid that's pollenless, it's naturally compact and requires minimal PGRs and has plenty of buds for lasting color indoors.



Ellen: I'm liking the Skyscraper Salvia series from Selecta One. It's an annual salvia with dark stems with big vigor, tall spikes and excellent garden performance. Like I said, it's tall, so it's a back-of-the-border plant. It needs a bit of a Bonzi drench. Chris, what's your next pick?



IDM-resistant impatiens update

Chris: I'll wrap up with something you can't yet get ... and won't be able to get for a couple of years: the experimental impatiens downy mildew (IDM)-resistant impatiens I wrote about in the March issue of *GrowerTalks*. PanAmerican had a "back-room" display of this impatiens and some commercial comparisons, all inoculated with IDM. It was pretty evident that the experimental impatiens truly does have "high resistance" to the disease, as the breeder has said. PanAm's plan is to do serious in-house testing all this year and then some grower trials next year. And they're doing production trials, for seed production and quality and such. Things look promising, but of course, like a good wine, they won't introduce it until its time. We'll continue to follow this story.



Ruud Brinkkemper holding the experimental impatiens and Lisa Lacy has the non-resistant commercial variety.

In which we finally wrap it up

Chris: Okay, Ellen, anything to add to our day at the Ball companies?

Ellen: Lunch was awesome. As it always is at Ball. Can you tell I'm really into food this week?

Chris: I count on you for our vegetable coverage. But leave the meat reviews to me.

Okay, that's day one in the books. We took a bunch of photos, shot a lot of videos, which Jen Zurko has been assiduously editing as we write this, and nobody was hurt in the process. And I wore a crown and a fireman's hat! I call that a good day.

Ellen: I'd say—and no black cats or hazardous happenings on this Friday the 13th. We survived to do this another day.

Chris: Which is Saturday, day two of the Spring Trials, wherein we visit Green Fuse,

Floranova and the 529 companies exhibiting at GroLink. Okay, that's a slight overstatement. I believe it's 15. Still, another full day. Be sure to open up the next *Acres of buZZ!* you get for more highlights and videos. And let us know what you think of the stuff we've covered or of our coverage in general. Just click our names at the end.

See you then!

Chris and Ellen

Handwritten signatures of Chris and Ellen in black ink.

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