

Spring Trials Day 2

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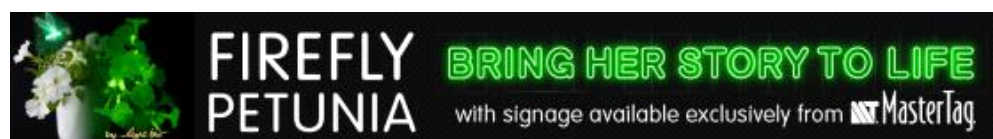
Ellen: What a great Day 2 of Spring Trials, wouldn't you say, Chris? Not a cloud in the sky, weather in the 70s and flowers, flowers and more flowers. Ahhhhh.

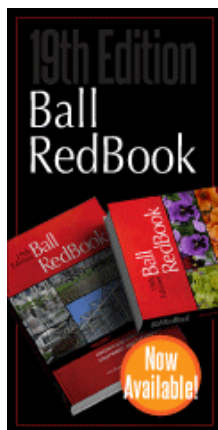
Chris: Fabulous! And crowded! Due to one of the big trials, which will remain nameless, and which decided to shorten their trial by a day, lots of folks decided that instead of starting in the north and working south, they'll start in the south and work north, as we always do. Hence, we have been cheek by jowl with big groups of seedsmen and women all day long!

Ellen: They'll outpace us eventually, which means no cheeks and jowls. I get the feeling you're missing barbeque.

Chris: Mmmm, barbecued pork jowls ... but we digress! Let's dive into today's coverage, which includes two stops—Green Fuse/Floranova (at the former Fides location) in Santa Paula, around the corner from Ball; and GroLink, in nearby Oxnard, which is home to more than a dozen exhibitors. Want to see more from Floranova? Check out the video [HERE](#). Meanwhile, we'll start with a few highlights in annuals and perennials from Green Fuse, eh?

Ellen: Sounds like a plant. I mean a plan. You start.





At Green Fuse

Chris: Okay, my pick in Green Fuse annuals has to go to *Salvia farinacea* Cathedral Blue Bicolor, simply because I'm a huge fan of *S. farinacea*. They're bulletproof in the landscape—drought-tolerant and pest-free. This one has nice two-tone flowers, is early to flower and can be grown anywhere, from Maine to Florida to California. What's not to like?



I also dig fuchsias and Green Fuse's Windchimes series gets two new ones: Basket Double Pink Lilac and Upright Lilac Rose. Steve Jones admits to being a simple man and he names things as they are—for baskets or upright. Makes it easy to know what you're getting.

You can see what we saw at Green Fuse [HERE](#).



A Sweet Treat



Annuals Picks

Ellen: I'll pick Green Fuse's additions to its Marineland Lobularia. Frosty Lavender is the first variegated lobularia I recall ever seeing. One doesn't really see leaves on a lobularia—which tells you something about how Frosty Lavender's flowers are set to reveal the leaves. But it's interesting and would be a nice novelty for combos. Marineland also gets a Pink.



Then there's the annual rudbeckia. That's right—an annual! Rising Sun Chestnut Gold, a *hirta* species, will bloom on short days—big difference with the perennial version—and can give you up to eight months of color. And it's darn pretty.





Speaking of perennials ...

Chris: Speaking of perennials, in their First Light perennials, my pick of the trial is a really cool Madrid Lavender called Lavish—the lavish part of the plant being its double-flowered or multibracted spikes. Mostly means the flowers are extra large and fluffy. Green Fuse has a utility patent on the flower form. Steve Jones says Lavish makes a good houseplant.



I also liked Green Fuse's new agastache series called Sunrise. The six-color series offers a mid-range height and good cold tolerance, which is why they're dropping the Acapulco series.



Ellen: I really liked their new leucanthemum, Double Angel Daisy, a shaggy dog of a flower—and I love dogs, so that’s a good assessment. Notice how the petals fall downward. It’s kinda cool! My other favorite perennial from Green Fuse are two new additions to the Staircase Lupine series, Blue and Dark Blue Yellow, which has a bit of a Johnny Jump-Up coloring to it.



Chris: Those lupines have been a big hit the last couple of years. Or as we put it in one of our videos, “What’s the scoop on the lupe?”

Ellen: Oh my gosh, we have way too much fun. We should move on, shouldn’t we?



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Next stop: Floranova

Chris: Righto! Next stop ... which is in the greenhouse right next door ... is Floranova. Now, Floranova used to be way out in Lompoc, which added an extra few hours on to the trip. Thankfully, they're much more convenient now. Ellen, I'll hit their flower introductions and you can tackle their Vegetalis vegetables.

Ellen: Go for it.

Chris: Floranova showed two whole new series. First, an F1 vinca series called Blockbuster. It's got good branching and is compact, like their Vitesse series, but it's got big flowers—easily 2-in. across. It was bred in Costa Rica. The series offers 10 colors.



The second new series is Reach Out Ivy Geraniums. Also an F1, this seed series competes against Tornado, they say, offering a compact habit that doesn't tangle on the bench. The six-color series has good seed quality and is a good low-cost alternative for growers wanting an ivy geranium for any container from jumbo packs to baskets.



Lastly, the trailing pansy series Freefall XL, which got a soft launch last year, is now in full introduction. It competes against Cool Wave.



On to the veggies

Ellen: Okay, on to the veggies. Vegetalis, Floranova's vegetable line, is all about small plants for small footprints. Their four intros—three peppers and one tomato—are in line with that directive.

Let's start with the tomato. First up the tomato Summerleaf, a cocktail-sized tomato on a small-statured plant, has been bred to keep its lower leaves once tomatoes higher up on the plant begin to ripen. Normally they senesce. But this keeps the plant looking fresh and green in the patio planting. Oh, and it's TMV resistant.



As for the peppers, like I said there are four. Alter Ego has a sweet-hot flavor, a “nice burn” as our tour guide Peter assured us, and ripens from a pale purple to a red. It’s also ToMV resistant.



Next up is Liberty Belle, a compact pepper that ripens to orange with good yield and improved flowering. The third is called Longhorn, a mild pepper that's long, ripens to red and yields lots of fruit. And the fourth—which we didn't get a chance to see since it wasn't there—is called Atomic, a pepper with a conical shape and a Scoville until rating of 90,000. Wish we saw it!

Chris: Saw it? Yes. Taste it? No, thank you! I'm from New England. We don't do hot food.

The biggest stop of the trials

Ellen: Wimp. Okay. We should move on to the next stop, GroLink in Oxnard. You start, Chris.

Chris: GroLink is the biggest stop of the trials, with about 15 companies exhibiting. Thankfully, not all are plant companies, otherwise, we'd have to dedicate about two days here. Of all the companies, we saw new introductions at eight of them, so let's each tackle a highlight from four of them. Our first visit was to Prudac, an acronym for "Production & Research for Urban Decoration and Consumption"—a fancy way to say they specialize in breeding tabletop veggies. They had several very small peppers, both sweet and hot, but my pick is a tiny tomato called Ponchi Fa. It's an F1 cherry tomato bred for 3- to 4-in. pots. As for the "Fa" name? Prudec is using a "Doe Ray Me Fa ..." naming strategy. Well, you've gotta name a plant something! Anyway, Ponchi Fa would be great for placesettings at a party—pick your own tomatoes and add them to your salad.



Learn more about Prudac [HERE](#).

A long name for a campanula

Ellen: In the bay right next to Prudec is Dutch breeder Schoneveld. My pick from them is not a cyclamen, which they're famous for, but for a campanula: Campanula Florentes Ambella Intense Purple. That's a long name to say it's a good plant for both indoor and outdoor (to Zone 4 to 5) uses. It's from cuttings. And isn't that color something? See it all in vivid color [HERE](#).



Chris: Lovely! Okay, again, one greenhouse bay over is Royal Van Zanten, another Dutch breeder. They're one of the few (maybe the only) alstromeria breeders on the Trials trail and I'm a sucker for a pretty alstromeria. Their series is Colorita and it gets two new colors, Tamara (purple) and Lisa (yellow, but not shown, alas).

PlantHaven

Ellen: I've been wondering what fun thing PlantHaven had to show us this year and my pick from them is actually from British breeder Walberton's, and it's called Silver Fountain Gaura. Interesting that a British breeder is breeding an American prairie native, huh? What makes it different is its variegated foliage. The lovely flowers aren't even necessary! But I wouldn't say no to those white/light pink blooms.



See more PlantHaven varieties [HERE](#).

Chris: You let me write about the new strawberry from ABZ Seeds, Ellen. Sweet! Literally! ABZ specializes in great-tasting strawberries that also happen to look beautiful and the new double-flowered Summer Breeze takes that to the next level with Double Rose Red or Pink blossoms. We've been saying that new gardeners will be attracted to ornamental plants that are also edible ... or is it edible plants that are also ornamental ...?



Ellen: It's both! I think the Coca-Cola campaign from a few years ago hit on it perfectly when they asked, "This, and ..."

Gerbera from Florist

Ellen: Anyway, onward to gerbera breeder Florist! I was wondering what they had in store for us this year since it's always a beautiful display. They had four new varieties: two new garden-appropriate Garvineas called Sweet Fiesta (a two-toned pink) and Sweet Sunset (a range of yellow-oranges) shown below, and two new Patio gerberas called Painted Desert and Orange County. I'm convinced these should be in my front door container pot.



See Florist's newest stuff [HERE](#).

Chris: Next stop at GroLink is a new company to us: Evanthia Seed & Plants. A new Dutch company, just 4 ½ years old, Evanthia specializes in seed—of summer cut flowers, of foliage and of other oddball plants, including crops as diverse as eucalyptus, bird of paradise and platycodon. Their most unique offering was a cyperus that they're marketing as a cat grass. They called it *Cyperus zumula*, but a bit of research reveals it as *Cyperus alternifolius* Zumula.



Learn what we learned about Evanthis [HERE](#).

Ellen: Last, but not least, is Suntory. They always have something colorful and cool to exhibit. The item I loved from them this year is their newest Senetti called Magic Salmon. The flowers start out periwinkle blue, then fade to salmon in the center as they age. Its coloring reminds me of Pantone's Color of the Year for 2016, which was a combo of Rose Quartz and Serenity. Chris thinks its color looks a bit like sidewalk chalk. Final assessment—we liked it!



We covered it all! Check out what we saw at Suntory [HERE](#).

What's on tap for Sunday?

Chris: A truly interesting color combination. I'd label Magic Salmon an end-cap variety, so folks

can appreciate the flowers up close. Okay, that wraps up just the best of the best of Day 2. We saw so much, we'd have to write all night to do it justice ... I mean, Green Fuse alone had 67 varieties! Which is why I've preached for 25 years that if you really want to know what's new at pack trials, er, Spring Trials, you need to come and see them for yourselves. But certainly, we do our best to give you a taste.

Ellen: Speaking of taste, today's lunch at GroLink was very good. Thanks everybody!

Chris: Okay, for Sunday, our schedule includes Windmill Nursery—home to four plant companies—and Dümmer Orange, where we should enjoy another fine lunch because it's at Edna Valley Vineyards. And then the long drive up to Salinas, where we'll begin the northern trials. Are you up for it, Ellen?

Ellen: Yes! Especially if I get to bed early tonight.

Chris: Then let's get this wrapped up and sent out! Enjoy the videos that Jen has been so diligently editing and we'll see you for Part 3 tomorrow!

Chris and Ellen

Handwritten signatures of Chris and Ellen in black ink.

Chris Beytes
Editor & Publisher
GrowerTalks and Green Profit

Ellen Wells
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