

Day 3 of Spring Trials

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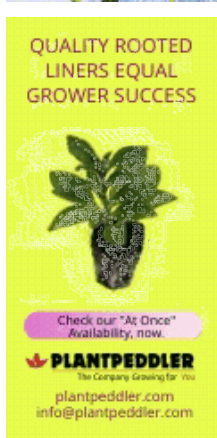






Get your questions answered





Day 3 ... and we haven't killed each other! (yet)

Chris: It's Sunday at the California Spring Trials, day 3 for the Bobbleheads, and it was a day with plenty of interesting flowers to see, including a new Easter lily, a begonia that I thought looked like a frog and an addition to what might be the oldest series still on display. Fun stuff!

Ellen: I agree with your opinion of that begonia. And then there were those beautiful hybrid begonias—not so frog-looking, but just as memorable.

Chris: Tons of driving, too, unfortunately. This is the day when one makes the long haul from Ventura, at the southern end of the trials, up to Dümmer Orange at the central portion of the trials, and then we continued on for two more hours to Salinas, so we can hit the northern portion of the trials easily Monday morning. About four hours of total windshield time. If we had one of those fancy autonomous cars, we could write while it drives!

Ellen: We could just call an Uber ...

Chris: Hmm. Wonder what that could cost for six days and 800 miles? But enough of the AAA Report, on to the Trials! Our first stop was a small garden center called Windmill, home to about 10 different plant and hardgoods exhibitors. Here are our favorite introductions from that stop. Ellen, what did you like?



What Ellen liked

Ellen: I liked a lot of stuff, actually! But what sticks in my mind are some of the intros from Terra Nova. Like their new Dakota Penstemon series, starting with two—Verde and Burgundy. These guys are the shortest hybrids on the market, they claim, at 18 to 24 in. rather than up to 4 ft. or more like a typical penstemon. No vernalization needed, either. And when it's not blooming, the foliage is pretty nice! Zones 4 to 9 for these.

Also new is their Heuchera Grande series, starting with Amethyst and Black. They have a 30-in. spread with giant 8- to 11-in. leaves, and it handles heat and humidity like a boss, they say.



And my last pick from Terra Nova is not a perennial at all—it's an annual artemesia called Makana Silver. It was described as a small "ball of fluff." Good drought tolerance, too—surprising for a plant native of Hawaii!



Chris: Makana means “handsome and strong” in Hawaiian, they say. You may call me “Makana” from now on, if you’d like.

(You can get a better look at all of them in this [VIDEO](#).)



How about some annuals?

Ellen: How about I stick with Bossman Beytes? What did you like at Windmill?

Chris: World-famous German breeding company Kientzler had a few colorful introductions that stuck with me. First, New Guinea Impatiens Paradise Dark Lavender. Paradise has been around as a series longer than just about anything you’ll see at Trials, I think, and it’s good to see they’re still breeding on this series. Andreas Kientzler says that between Paradise and Pure Beauty, they’ve got at least 50 varieties!



Also from Kientzler is Calendula Power Daisy Orange, which joins Power Daisy Sunny, introduced last year. Only calendula we saw this year (so far).

Lastly, I’ll call out the SummerSmile collection of osteospermum. They’ve bred these for good summer performance and to require no chill-period to bloom. They have a nice mounded habit,

too. You can see this and a few other Kientzler items in this [VIDEO](#).



Back to that begonia

Ellen: I'll talk about that frog-looking begonia you mentioned at the beginning, Chris. It's from J.Berry Nursery and it's part of a brand new series of rhizomatous begonia hybrids called Crown Jewel, all four named for different gemstones. The frog-colored one is called Positively Peridot. Other "jewels" include Enduring Onyx, Tenacious Topaz and Joyful Jasper. Originally from Mexico and Central America, these hybrids were bred in northern Alabama (by the same breeder who did their Black Diamond Crape Myrtle) for heat tolerance. They have some blooms, but really, it's all about the foliage!

You'll see Positively Peridot and all the rest in this video [HERE](#).



Tamara Risken holding Crown Jewel Positively Peridot Begonia.



Three new lilies

Chris: Lastly, at the Windmill stop, was a new exhibitor, 2Plant, a lily distributor that is one of two companies to have the rights to the LilyLooks genetics out of Holland (the other being Zabo Plant). 2Plant had three lily breakthroughs from LilyLooks. The first is an unnamed LA hybrid lily intended for pot production. LA is a cross between longiflora (Easter lily) and Asiatic lily. Normally used for cut flowers, and very tall, they require lots of PGRs for pots. This one is naturally compact. There are five colors, but no name yet.



The second breakthrough is an oriental lily called Speedy that blooms in just 55 days, compared to the usual 90 to 100 days.

Lastly, how about a new Easter lily? I don't know when that last happened. This one, called Miracle, finishes in just 78 days—three weeks earlier than Nellie White. It's also naturally compact, requiring no PGRs. The bulbs are smaller, so you plant three per pot and should get nine flowers (at a lower cost than one Nellie White bulb, they say).

All three of these varieties are still a couple of years away from commercial introduction, as they build up numbers. But if you're a lily grower, you'll want to keep your eyes on these! And put your eyes on this [VIDEO](#) about 2Plant, too.



We start at Dümme

Ellen: We jumped in the Nissan Armada (Platinum edition!) and drove an hour or so north to Edna Valley Vineyards, where Dümmen Orange has hosted their trials for years now. Gorgeous location and the lunch was excellent. But it's about the plants, right? So let's get to those.

I'll start by telling you about the new addition to the Wild Romance series of double-flowered New Guinea impatiens. Red joins White and Blush Pink. The best thing about the Red addition is it adds a bold color to a mixed container. Well, that and the fact that it's beautiful.



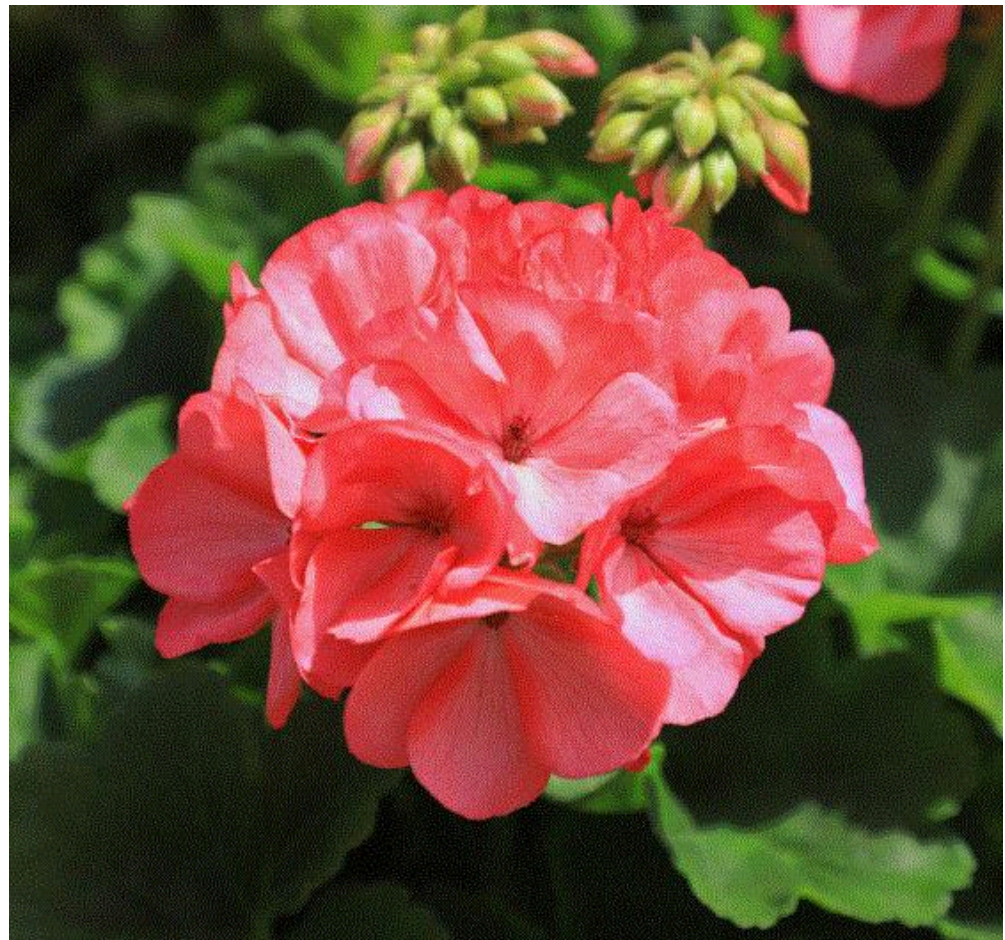
Chris, what else do you have? Because this is about where the blood drained from my head, relegating me to a shady spot so I wouldn't faint (sorry about abandoning you).

Chris: Have I been working you too hard? Or has six months of New England winter left you feeble and unable to handle the California sunshine? Regardless, Jen and I have you covered!

In addition to Wild Romance, Dümmen of course had a good selection of new Confetti mixes, some of which featured their new petunia, Fiona Flash (below), and new calibrachoa, Aloha Nani Tropicana.



In geraniums, the Big Eeze series gets Foxy Flamingo ... with flamingo being a good description for the color.



And lastly, their l'Conia Begonias get a new subseries called Portofino. These are dark-leaved hybrid begonias with vivid flowers on mounded, floriferous, heat-tolerant plants. Dümmer can certainly breed colorful flowers!



See these annuals and more in this [VIDEO](#).

Perennials

Chris: Since you were still indisposed, I'll cover the perennial side of Dümmer ... although to be honest, you're really going to want to wait for Paul Pilon's *Perennial Pulse* newsletter for details on the specific varieties. But I can say that Dümmer is doing a fantastic job developing perennial combination planters. They've also been trialing dianthus in mixed Confetti planters, which give some nice color combinations.



Dümmen's in the calla business

Chris: Lastly (at least in flowers) is Dümmen's callas, which come from Golden State Bulb and Dutch company Sande, both of which Dümmen purchased recently. We know that Dümmen has moved bulb production from California to Holland; they say they'll have bulbs ready to ship by Week 51.

Back in the Golden State days, we were lucky to see two or three introductions in a season; Dümmen had at least half a dozen! They aren't messing around. New callas include Pink Star, which has pink blooms and maculated foliage, Callaifornia Gold (below left); Pink Arrow and Callaifornia Fiesta (below right). There will be plenty of bulbs available, too; for instance, in Pink Star, they've got 1.5 million bulbs!



Basewell: a new product form

Chris: The last thing you missed at Dümmen, Ellen, was Basewell, a whole new form of cutting that Dümmen just introduced. Basewell is a rooted cutting, shipped to growers in 51-count strips that fit in the AutoStix automatic cutting transplanter. Basewell moves the sticking and the rooting process offshore, where labor is both less expensive and available. That relieves you, the grower, from the burden of finding people to stick cuttings. Dümmen applies a gel to the roots before shipping to protect them.



You can get Basewell cuttings as full 51-count strips that will run through your AutoStix machine, or as individual cartridges, which can be planted by an ISO robot or stuck by hand. Dümme is offering their entire spring annual line as Basewell, with the exception of begonias.

Cost? Figure somewhere between the price of a callused cutting and a rooted liner. But remember: you don't have to invest the time, space and labor into rooting, so you can put it all to better use. Whew! And that was Dümme, Ellen ... or at least a taste of it. In fact, here's the [VIDEO](#) I made about it while you were perking yourself up in the shade.

There's always tomorrow ...

I'm feeling better, so I will resume the role of your sidekick tomorrow, boss. We're headed to Floracultura, Sakata, Takii and Speedling, so it'll be a long day. Good thing we're finishing this on the early side of midnight.

And we'll see you all tomorrow, too!

Chris and Ellen

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