

Spring Trials Day what? 4?

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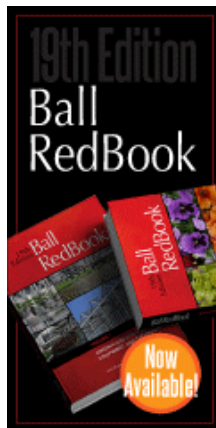
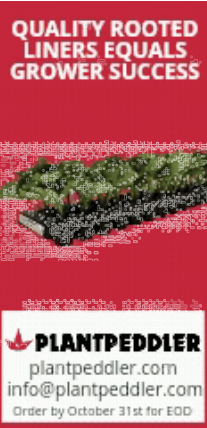
IN THIS EDITION

Companies at Floricultura
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30 YEARS wave

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Two-Thirds Done!

Ellen: Howdy, folks! We're two-thirds of the way through our Spring Trials coverage. Chris is busy finishing up some work on the May issue of *GrowerTalks*, so you've got me for a few minutes. To pass the time, let me answer a few questions I imagine you may have for us about what we've been seeing.

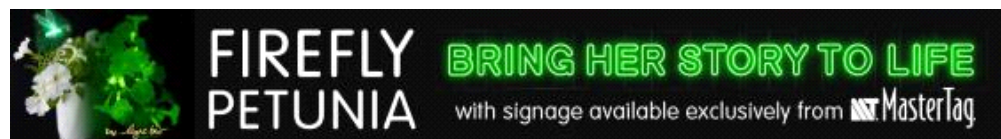
How's it been so far? Well, we've seen nothing that will change the world. Plenty of nice individual varieties and additions to series, a few new series intros and startlingly few new series in the important classes. But all nice stuff!

Have you noticed any themes? One trend might be called "clarifying the confusing." At least three different companies have tried to simplify how they categorize some of their broad product categories. For example, we mentioned Selecta One's clarification of their six subseries of Minifamous Calibrachoa into just two: Uno and Neo. And Sakata has dropped the "spreading" category of SunPatiens. Companies realize that confusion doesn't help sell.

Has Chris eaten any barbeque? No.

Chris: Not that I couldn't have, but I have figured out that California is better for fish tacos and Mexican. When in Rome ... But don't feel sorry for me: I'm building a big brick smoker in my backyard and will be eating plenty of ribs and brisket this summer.

Ellen: I'm still trying to convince you to make a pizza oven ... Anyway, I digress. Let's get on with it, shall we, Chris?



New Calibrachoas

Chris: First stop of Day 4 was the big orchid producer Floricultura, which leases out a chunk of its headhouse to four companies. The first was Westhoff, where I felt the highlight was their new Candy Shop Calibrachoa series. The variety Candy Bouquet started the series; Westhoff has added four colors—Candy Crush, Fancy Berry, Sweet Dreams and Grape Splash—and named the series Candy Shop. Each features a speckly star pattern.



Also new in Westhoff calibrachoas is Calibrachoa Chameleon Atomic Orange. Chameleons are thus named because they change color as the temperature changes.

Want to see all we saw at Westhoff? Check out the [VIDEO](#) here.



Petunias & poinsettias

Ellen: On up the line at Floricultura was the Dutch breeder Beekenkamp. They introduced a whole new petunia series called Tea. They compare Tea to the leading vegetative petunia series in Europe, Sardinia, but say they went for a more compact, mounding habit, which gives it good rain resistance.



Beekenkamp also showed us four new poinsettias—one for late season (Hera), one for mid season (Leona) and two for Black Friday (Aries, for warmer climates, and Astra, for the rest of the country). And they looked pretty fabulous for April, if you ask me.

See these two and a few more items [HERE](#).



Hamelia & Hybrid Tea Shrub Roses

Chris: With Plug Connection being a plug and young plant producer, we don't expect to see proprietary and unique genetics coming from them. But they offered up two interesting

introductions this year. The first is a heat-loving tropical shrub called Hamelia Lime Sizzler. We're not familiar with the genus, but were told it's known as Mexican fire bush. This bright yellow and green variegated selection comes from Greenleaf Nursery in Texas. While best for the landscape in hot climates, Lime Sizzler will work in summer patio pots, too, we think.



Next from Plug Connection—and one of the most interesting introductions we've seen thus far this year—is the rose collection True Bloom. Bred by Ping Lim of Plug Connection owner Altman Plants, True Bloom was bred to have the disease resistance of a shrub rose and the look of a hybrid tea ... a hybrid tea shrub rose, Ping calls it. And judging from the sample plants, he may have managed it. They're even branding the rose and growers will be required to use True Bloom pots. It'll be interesting to see if Altman's can compete with the big rose guys.



We give you a live look at Plug Connection [HERE](#).



Sakata's Fresh Veg

Ellen: Chris, I'll give you a break and let you finish that *GrowerTalks* piece you're working on and I'll write about the veggies we saw at our next stop, Sakata Seed. They had quite a few, but I'll mention just three, starting with Desperado, a "hot" Anaheim-type chili pepper that ripens to red in just 70 days. I put hot in quotes because it tops out at just 350 to 600 Scoville units—that's quite mild.

The second, Camaro, is a slicing tomato on a determinate plant. They say it's a "hot set" type, meaning that it sets fruit even when temperatures get quite hot, as opposed to most tomatoes that stop setting fruit at that point.



The third is a cabbage called Primo Vantage. Perfect for pots or urban gardens, it has a small footprint in the garden and produces a small, 4-lb. head. It's meant to be used fresh, so let's make cole slaw.

There's other stuff we mention in our video of Sakata's veg line. Catch it [HERE](#).



Sakata's Flowers

Chris: SunPatiens, Ellen! That's what Sakata is becoming best known for. Funny, back in the day, it was pansies (which they still have plenty of, of course). SunPatiens Vigorous get three additions: Vigorous Orchid, Vigorous Rose Pink and Vigorous Red; while SunPatiens Compact gets Compact Pink Candy, which, by the way, is the first bicolor in the SunPatiens line. Also in SunPatiens news, Sakata has dropped the "Spreading" SunPatiens moniker, rolling most of them into Vigorous. (Why? Because everyone seems to have their own definition of what "spreading" means.)



Next, I'll mention Profusion Zinnia, which has more AAS winners than probably any other single series (seven, at my count, including doubles). To celebrate, Sakata has created the Profusion

AAS Mix, which combines Profusion single AAS Winners White, Cherry, Orange and Red.

Lastly, Sakata has introduced the SuperCal Premium Petunia series. This sub-series of SuperCal feature big flowers in special colors. The five that start it are Cinnamon, Bordeaux, Caramel Yellow, French Vanilla and Sunray Pink. Ellen and I felt they all offered a very defined look—autumnal, you might say, especially when combined. If you want a good look for late summer/fall baskets, a mix of these can't be beat.



Go through our walkthrough of Sakata [HERE](#).

Three from Takii

Chris: After Sakata, we crossed 101 for the 10-minute drive to Takii. Most significant of their introductions, I think, were the three new South Pacific Canna Lilies: Rose, Ivory and Orange (which is a 2018 AAS winner). These three join Scarlet, which was introduced five years ago (it was an AAS winner in 2013). As a reminder, South Pacific are F1 seed cannas, meaning dependable production and little risk of the diseases inherent in vegetative cannas.



Next comes an upgrade to their Fantasy Linaria series. The new one is Fantasista. It offers a more compact habit with lots of branching for a full, sturdy plant. Seed comes multi-pelleted to aid in producing a good finished plant. Five colors in the series.



Finally is Helianthus Smiley. This F1 pot sunflower is fast to grow with a good habit, loads of side buds and no need to pinch.

Next stop, Speedling

Ellen: This leads us to our next stop, Speedling, again just a 15-minute drive. Our first visit there was to Hem Genetics, which has nothing to do with pant legs and everything to do with seed genetics. (Hem is actually named for the Dutch town where it's located.) They had a couple things to mention: First is the addition of Violet and Blue to their Limbo Picotee Mix, giving the mix five colors now (Violet and Blue are only available in the mix, but will be introduced next year).



Second is the creation of Hem Technologies, which gives them the ability to do high-tech seed technology for themselves—pelleting, priming, coating and such—instead of farming it out. The savings help pay for the technology.

Chris: I'll tell you what I liked best at Hem, Ellen: the fact that they invited famous Disney horticulturist Heather Will-Browne out to their trial and asked her to "play" with their varieties, creating combo planters in the Disney way. She didn't go totally crazy, but she did put together some nice planters intended to give attendees a fresh perspective on what you can do with Hem's annuals. For instance, this combination of Dianthus Supra Pink, Ageratum Blue Diamond and a thyme plant.



Or this extra-colorful one featuring Chica Flame Marigold, Limbo Violet Petunias and Enorma Gazania. This one Heather dubbed "Holy Mole'."



Growing up

Ellen: Oh, that's a pretty one, Chris. Let's stroll up the aisle to where Thompson & Morgan was stationed for the week. We love seeing what T&M has each year because it's guaranteed to be outside the box. But this year, they had something inside the box: Growing kits, which they're selling in the UK. They had a cut flower kit, a super food kit, a bonsai kit—probably nearly a dozen different offerings. It's an effort to get folks growing without necessarily having them go to the garden center.

Live plant highlights including the 2-ft. tall sunflower SunBelievable Brown Eyed Girl, a vegetative item for pots and borders that they say can produce 1,000 flowers per plant! The plant they showed was in a Monrovia pot - that's because Monrovia has the U.S. license for the plant. Danziger will be producing unrooted cuttings and Express Seed has the 2019 exclusive on the crop.



We saw a few new petunia series this week, but none rivaled the Tickled series for sheer size! This series sprawls out to 2-meters across (about 7 ft.), but they had them trained up in cages to form petunia towers. The series starts with five colors.



A bougainvillea from Puerto Rico

Chris: It was good to see Vista Farms at Spring Trials this year, after the island was hit by Hurricane Maria last year. They were lucky compared to much of the island and were back in business pretty quickly. They even named a new bougainvillea variety after the storm! Alas, they didn't have one to show us, but they did have another new one, called Sunstone White. It's mostly white, with just faint tinges of pink.



Where to next?

Ellen: That wraps up the day-four report. And Chris also just wrapped up the May *GrowerTalks*. I'd call that a productive day, wouldn't you, bossman?

Chris: Not bad for a couple of bobbleheads. Another four stops down and another seven videos to add to the dozens Jen Zurko has edited and posted to YouTube ... and we still have two days left. Tomorrow it's Syngenta, Proven Winners and Danziger—three good trials where we may yet see that groundbreaker we've been looking for. Tune in tomorrow to find out what we unearth!

Ellen: See you then!

Chris and Ellen

Handwritten signatures of Chris and Ellen in black ink.

Chris Beytes
Editor & Publisher
GrowerTalks and *Green Profit*

Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
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