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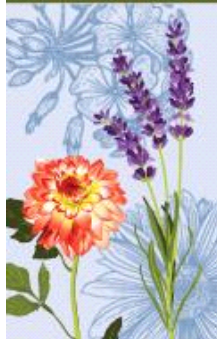


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The last day, at last!

Ellen: Well, here we are, Chris. Safely tucked into the hotel for the last evening of our annual *Acres of Buzz* creation. It's taken us six days, upwards of 800 miles of driving and at least 12 bottles of wine to get you, Jen Z and me to this point.

Chris: Don't forget, we even have a bottle of champagne waiting for us after we hit the "send" button!

Ellen: Because it *is* a celebration, Chris! Not to cheers what we do, of course—we just look at flowers all day, after all—but to salute the efforts of the hundreds of people it takes to make all of this happen. From the breeder, with an inkling of an idea for a new variety, to the folks checking everyone in at each trials. It takes a horticultural village to make it all happen! Cheers to you!

Chris: I'd raise my glass, but we haven't popped the champagne yet. And we can't if we don't get this puppy written. So, Ellen, let's dive into our first stop, Pacific Plug & Liner, and share a few of the introductions we think are most important or most interesting. Ladies first.



PP&L

Ellen: Will do. I'll actually start not with our host, PP&L, but with another exhibitor at their greenhouse: Bailey Nurseries. The big news from them is the introduction of *Hydrangea* Summer Crush. It's the fifth member of their Endless Summer line of *Hydrangea macrophylla*. How important is it? Well, it's the only raspberry-colored mophead in the reblooming hydrangea category. Summer Crush, which will be available to retailers in 2019, joins the original Endless Summer (2004), Blushing Bride (2007), Twist and Shout (2009), and Bloom Struck (2014).



Chris: Jen Zurko actually saw it last summer at Bailey and was sworn to secrecy ... and she kept the secret! Amazing.

Okay, before I share my favorite from PP&L, I want to give a big shout-out to April Herring-Murray for yet again wowing everyone with her theme- and display-building prowess.



This year it was "Welcome to the Jungle," with rock-inspired displays ... such as "Van Heuchera," "Grass Sabbath," "Echinacea in Chains" and "Highway to Hellebore" ... which leads to my favorite introduction of theirs, Hellebore Glenda's Gloss. From renowned breeder Rodney Davey, this newest member of the Frostkiss family has marbled foliage and white flowers with violet edges.



Ellen: Chris, did you see the succulent-planted guitar case? Or the planted boom box? Well, you figure they can't use the latter anymore, I guess.

Chris: Forget that—I was digging the succulent-planted drum set. That's my idea of a rock garden!



Two from Sunset/Southern Living

Chris: We always see the folks from Plant Development Services Inc. at PP&L, representing the *Sunset* and *Southern Living* magazine brands. They've got lots of great genetics in the programs, some of which cross over into both of them, which is pretty good, seeing how the gardening areas covered by the two magazines are quite different from each other. They showed us two introductions we hadn't seen anywhere else.

The first is *Leucothoe Burning Love*. *Leucothoe* is a Zone 6 to 9 evergreen shrub with narrow leaves and pretty, dark red new foliage. They say you can use it in the landscape or on a patio. Grows about 30 in. by 30 in. This is it in the background.



The second intro, in the foreground, is *Bottlebrush (Callistemon) Light Show Red*. Naturally compact, this bottlebrush has nice green foliage and pretty red flowers from early summer through fall. It's very drought tolerant, too, and gives the southwest landscape a "lush dry" look. In other words, a nice alternative to a cactus!

Interested in seeing what this *leucothoe* is all about? You can find it and many other items we saw at PP&L in this [VIDEO](#).



Happy 175, Benary!

Ellen: I did like the looks of that bottlebrush, Chris. But let's move on down the road a piece to the Benary trial. It's always a treat to be hosted by Benary—and not only because they serve beer with lunch!

The history of this six-generation family business seems to be always present. That is especially true when managing director Matthias Redlefsen is around. And triply true when it's a big anniversary for the company—175 years this year!



Chris: The company is lucky to be celebrating its dodransbicentennial (yes, that's a word). If it hadn't been for Fritz Benary (above), who pedaled across Germany to collect seeds after the Russians annexed East Germany after WWII, the company would have ended with them. But he rebuilt the business in the new West Germany and the rest is history. To honor the company's "super hero," Benary will be sending bicycles around the world to deliver seed to growers in symbolic payment to those who helped Fritz some 80 years ago. A great story! I wonder how many of today's business owners would bicycle across country to rebuild their business?

Oh, and speaking of Fritz being the company "super hero," they've introduced a French marigold series called Super Hero, an obvious upgrade from the old Badger Hero series (which Benary acquired quite a while back). It has large flowers and a compact, but not dwarf, habit. The series has eight colors.



Several New Things

Ellen: Benary is world-famous for begonias and they, of course, had several new introductions in that category. Sprint Plus, the all-green-leaf, burly and uniform fibrous begonia, adds two colors—Lipstick and Orange Bicolor (below), which they believe is the first of its kind.



The Funky site-specific begonias—combining the ease of *boliviensis* and the flower power of tuberous—adds two colors: White and Orange.



Chris: Ellen, did you know the world's first commercial F1 flower came from Benary ... and it was a begonia called Primadonna? 1909. But, of course, you knew; Matthias told us.

Okay, something else new for 2018: new petunias. Benary has the Success multiflora series; they've added a grandiflora version called Success 360°. The 360 indicates its round, mounded habit. There are 13 colors in this series. If you want a really compact grandiflora, the new

Success HD fits the bill. HD means high density. These are genetically dwarf and need no PGRS. Seven colors.



Next door to the Success were the Lollipop Impatiens, which get three new colors: Pink Lemonade, Tangerine and Dragon Fruit, which is lipstick-colored. But Dragon Fruit sure sounds more interesting.



Heading Outside

Ellen: All that was just inside the greenhouse. Stepping outside, we found several new pansy and viola varieties. The Inspire DeLuXXe pansy (extra-large flowers) gets a new Pink Surprise Blotch and the Inspire Plus Pansy series (large flowers) gets two new ones—Pink Shades and Orange Blotch (pictured). They're thinking (and we are, too) that Orange Blotch may be the only orange with a face out on the market. (If you know otherwise, drop us a line.)



For violas, the Admire series gets four beauties: Neon Purple Wing, Lavender Pink Face, Deep Purple Face and Lemon Purple Wing. We saw them a day after a heavy rainstorm and they were nonplussed about the whole thing.

Chris: Very little bothers a viola. Well, that's a taste of what's new at Benary; the last thing I'll mention regards Benary's new online ordering system, or "webshop" as they call it, featuring live availability by week for seed and URCs. The system just went live this week.

(Actually, the very last thing I will mention is this [VIDEO](#) we took while at Benary. We worked up a sweat!)

Last Day, Last Stop!

Chris: Okay, onward, Ellen, to our very last stop of this six-day adventure: Suncrest Nursery. Now, we had no idea where this place was ... turns out it's right around the corner from Pacific Plug & Liner. Suncrest is a local grower that has leased space to Cohen, Jaldety, Hishtil and a newcomer to Trials, Nir. Ellen, pick a favorite or two from this stop.

Ellen: I'll pick one category (succulents) and two items in it from Jaldety, how's that? *Crassula deceptor* Stone Age Silver might look like a typical crassula, but it's super indestructible. Jen Z and I tried to bust it up for several minutes. Nothing doing.

Chris: Succulents: Hot! And now unbreakable. If we could just get that crassula's trait into a burro's tail or string of pearls. They break if I look at them wrong.

Ellen: The second is *Aeonium Bicolor* (below). The rosettes are quite a bit smaller than typical *aeonium* and each has a two-toned coloration. Plus it's cascading, which is super cool.



Gaura, Ellen!

Chris: We've seen quite a bit of it this season, but possibly the most impressive, for sheer retailability, have to be the Summer Star series from Hishtil. These are compact, with really good habits. The flowers aren't too high above the foliage and the plants are full. Three are experimentals—Blossom, Cherry and White. But the one that was introduced is Summer Star Baby. This is a true dwarf, growing to maybe a foot tall. Flowers, which hover just at the top of the plant, are a rich pink.



Ellen: We've also seen a ton of fuchsia this year, too. Cohen introduced one this year that's unlike any I've seen before. From a British breeder and called Hardy Victory Chilli Red, it takes a fair amount of frost, hence the "hardy" in its name. It stays fairly compact, too. One other thing: The sepals peel back a bit to reveal ... not much. There's not that balloony ring of petals. It's super different—and I like it. Plus, that constant red color throughout is spellbinding.



Chris: Since you mentioned Cohen, what about that Nemesis Honey series? I've never seen a nicer habit and richer colors on a nemesia. Small-flowered, but those flowers have a great scent.



Ellen: Honey has 13 colors, by the way. Bicolor Pink was my fave.

New Company, New Genera

Chris: The last stop at the last stop of our last day was an Israeli company we'd never heard of, showing some very interesting Australian native crops. Nir Nursery is a third-generation breeder of wax flower (*chamelaucium*) and kangaroo paw (*anigozanthus*) for both cuts and pots. But their most unusual plant, at least to us, is *adenanthos*, or coast woollybush. It's in the *proteaceae* family. They have both upright and cascading forms; I have a fondness for the upright one because it's called Chris-Tal. Finally, a plant named for me, Ellen!



Ellen: Not for you, Chris! I heard Asaf Nir say the "Tal" in Chris-Tal is for his mother. They also call Chris-Tal the "friendly" Christmas tree because it's just so soft; no stubby needles on this "tree." So the "Chris" is for Christmas. Sorry to burst your bubble.

Chris: Ah, well. I still have *Artemisia* "Makana."

You can see all the great stuff we saw at Suncrest Nursery [HERE](#).

Last Words

Chris: So, Ellen, any last thoughts after six days, 15 stops, 50-plus companies and 1,000 or so

introductions?

Ellen: Thoughts? Well, thinking back on this week I realize I wanted to give my business card and address out to about 20 different plants and tell them to meet me at my house. That's a good thing because that means I like them. That desire to bring a bunch of these plants home hasn't happened in a while.

Your thoughts?

Chris: People keep asking us, "So what did you see that was important?" Always a hard question to answer, in part because it all becomes a blur. I do know we've seen a lot of dianthus, a lot of salvia and a lot of sunflowers. We've seen loads of color additions and a decent number of new series. As for significant? We'll just have to watch the market to see what takes off.

I do know it's been fun! Grueling 18-hour days, but fun! Our next step: webinars, and full coverage in our July and August *GrowerTalks* and *Green Profit* magazines.

Ellen: Ah, well, before we get started on the second and third rounds of coverage, shall we pop the cork?

Chris: Ah, yes! We're finished! We just want to say thanks for making the journey with us. If you missed any of our coverage, go to www.springtrials.com. For every video, go to www.youtube.com/growertalks and look for the Spring Trials 2018 play list.

Cheers, Ellen! Cheers, everybody!

(Psst. Wanna see all the things we blooped on? Check out our bloopers [HERE](#).)

Chris and Ellen

Handwritten signatures of Chris and Ellen in black ink.

Chris Beytes
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