

Spring Trials: Day 1

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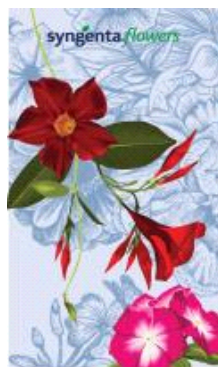


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## We do it again!

**Chris:** Hey, Ellen!

**Ellen:** Hey, Chris! Dude, this looks very familiar. We're back in California again, aren't we?

**Chris:** You are observant! It's you and me and videographer extraordinaire Jen Zurko back in California doing our annual tour of Spring Trials. Six days, dozens of stops, hundreds of new varieties, and more wine and snacks than we really should be drinking and eating.

**Ellen:** All of that is true, except I'm drinking a nice locally crafted IPA at the moment. And, as usual, we've begun our journey with our traditional first, the Ball Horticultural Companies, hosted at PanAmerican Seed's Santa Paula facilities. Set the scene for our readers, Chris.

**Chris:** One more sign we're at Spring Trials: Jen is over there at the desk, editing video and cackling at one of our outtakes—I think the one where we couldn't get the colors of that new begonia quite straight. But yes, to set the scene: Nine different companies today under one roof. Loads of introductions in annuals, perennials, veggies, herbs, woodies ... even a blueberry in a hanging basket—how about we take each company and talk about an introduction we especially liked?

**Ellen:** Sounds like a plan, my man. Who starts? How about you start?



## PanAmerican Seed

**Chris:** This is a no-brainer of all no-brainers: PanAm's introduction of Beacon Impatiens, their first IDM (Impatiens Downy Mildew)-resistant impatiens series. I've written about it a ton, starting in the March 2018 *GrowerTalks* after I saw it in Holland. Now it gets introduced globally to the markets that most need it: the eastern and southern U.S., UK, South Africa and Australia. By next year it will be fully available.

Six colors and a mix, with more colors on the way (about the only important color missing is rose). They showed it next to Super Elfin, both of which had been inoculated with IDM. The Super Elfin were about dead; the Beacon were untouched. Oh, and they showed the only competitor, Imara XDR from Syngenta, and I'm sorry to say the Imara looked like it was being affected by the IDM, too. Of course, the real test of both is the landscape. Consumers will decide if one or both will be successful.



**Ellen:** The comparisons were notable, for sure. I also want to point out that PamAmerican also has POP available for carts and such that has the consumer message of “healthy plants all season long,” which makes sense because consumers might not know much about Impatiens Downy Mildew, but they know they want healthy plants.

Okay, my highlight from PanAmerican Seed is their new gerbera series called ColorBloom. What’s different about it? Well, for one, its foliage is smaller and less leafy, so the flowers, which sit up high, really stand out. Add to it colors that don’t fade and an early finish time (seven to 10 days sooner than the competition), and this new series of five colors is one you should consider if you’re in the market for compact (quart-size) gerberas.



[HERE](#) is our video of these and more from PanAmerican.



## Ball FloraPlant

**Chris:** PanAmerican is seed annuals; Ball FloraPlant offers vegetative annuals, many of which are mainstream, like geraniums and calibrachoa. But I liked a pair of giant hybrid salvia they introduced, a red one and a purple one. *Salvia Roman Red* looks almost like an oversized *Salvia splendens*, but it's a hybrid with big red blooms. Next to it was *Salvia Purple & Bloom*. Think *Black & Bloom*, but with big purple flowers. They compared it to the variety *Amistad*, but said it's 25% more compact.



**Ellen:** My pick is another easy one: Galaxy Geraniums. What? Another zonal geranium series? Yes. What they did to select this one is an extensive system of trials from which they accumulated a million data points on 100,000 potential varieties with the goal of finding the best heat-resistant, garden performance varieties. The result is Galaxy, a series they say they'll put up against anything in the market—including the class-leading interspecific series Calliope. Now, the Galaxy Dark Red isn't quite as dark as Calliope Dark Red, but it's nice. Will it perform as well? Again, that's up to customers and consumers.





## Selecta One

**Ellen:** Chris, did you know that 2019 is the Year of the Dahlia, according to National Garden Bureau? And it's like Selecta One had been preparing for it all year. They had quite the dahlia display, with additions to its Dahlietta, Dayala and City Lights series. But the big news was a whole new dahlia series called Venti. Like Starbucks' largest coffee, it's big, suitable for 1 gallons and premium containers. It's 20% more vigorous than Dalayas, is totally appropriate for landscapes and has bigger flowers, too. They have nine colors, with Passion Fruit being my fave. Chris, have we ever seen a variety of anything named Passion Fruit before?



**Chris:** I'd have to check back through 25 years of notes ... but off the top of my head—no, Passion Fruit as a color doesn't ring a bell.

Okay, my choice for a Selecta One intro is a pair of double calibrachoas. Followers of this email know that last year Selecta One reorganized all of their various calibrachoa into two categories: Uno and Neo. Uno are compact and early, while Neo are mid-sized and more suited for baskets. Both series contain singles, doubles and bicolors. The two introductions are Uno Double PlumTastic, and Neo Double OrangeTastic. Both doubles (obviously), with bicolor patterns. They've worked them into their Trixi combinations, too.

For these and more, watch our Bobblehead video [HERE](#).



## Kieft Seed

**Ellen:** Let's next talk perennials and specifically seed perennials from Kieft Seed. The first they showed us was the new Salvatore Blue Salvia, a *nemorosa* species. It brings a vegetative look to a seed variety, meaning it's big and voluptuous with big, deep blue spikes and black stems. The good thing about it is it has a 10-hour daylength, meaning it flowers earlier than the salvias you might have on your benches—and it'll look better on your retail benches than comparable varieties. Put it on an annuals production schedule and you're good to go.



**Chris:** Hmmm, Kieft. They had that big leucanthemum called Madonna that looked nice and two new Bandera lavenders. But I'll go with the three new colors of Dianthus Rockin'. This is a knee-high series, great for the backdrop of gardens. Big flowers in bold colors: Rose, Pink Magic and Purple. It's a Zone 5 to 8 perennial.



## Darwin Perennials

**Chris:** I might as well keep the perennial thing going with my favorite Darwin Perennial, *Digitalis* Arctic Fox Rose. Now, what makes it unique is it's an interspecies hybrid that gives the unique color of those interspecific types like *Digiplexis*, but with much improved cold tolerance—Zone 5, to be specific, compared to Zones 7 to 8 for regular hybrids. The only downside is that they don't have any other colors coming from this specific breeding line, however, they're working on more crosses to bring more variety.



**Ellen:** From a retail perspective, I'll chose Darwin's Herb-a-Licious program. For what they call "back porch gardens," these pre-determined perennial herb combo containers are recipes for whatever the consumer wants. Like the Back Patio Sips combo, which has varieties of sage, basil, stevia, mint and thyme. And the Buzz Off combo with varieties that scare off mosquitos. With six combo recipes at the moment, this program has something to satisfy everyone.

For more, here's the [VIDEO](#) we shot of all the Darwin varieties.



## Burpee

**Chris:** Herb-a-Licious! Great patio combos. Speaking of patios and veggies, Burpee offered up some interesting patio veggies in the form of the Mardi Gras pepper collection—four snack-style peppers: Red, Orange, Yellow and Purple. We were told this is in response to demand from gardeners who are asking to be able to grow the same tasty snack-size peppers they can buy in the grocery stores. They're tasty (I tried one), easy and uniform to color up. Grill 'em, saute 'em or enjoy them fresh.



**Ellen:** What I loved from Burpee was something I'd never seen before—a red Brussels sprout! Redarling is the same hue as a red cabbage, but like an ultra-mini sprouts version. While it takes 120 days or so to harvest, I'd say it's worth the wait for something unique like a red sprout. Oh, and Burpee's Tim Duffin told us the red sprouts are sweeter than the green ones. Can't wait to give it a try.

Check them out [HERE](#) in our video.

## Ball Ingenuity

**Chris:** Let's wrap up with three varieties from the last three Ball companies, Ball Ingenuity, Morel (not owned by Ball, but Ball Seed has the North American exclusive to their varieties) and Star

## Roses & Plants.



For Ball Ingenuity, I really dig a new begonia called Betulia (above). This is a compact *hiemalis* type with small leaves and loads of flowers. It's a tough little plant that's good for quarts or 6-in. pots and suited for sales from Easter through Memorial Day, used indoors or out. Bred by Koppe, the series starts with four colors: Red, Candy Pink, Light Pink and Bright Pink.

Check out our Ball Ingenuity video, with Betulia and more, [HERE](#).

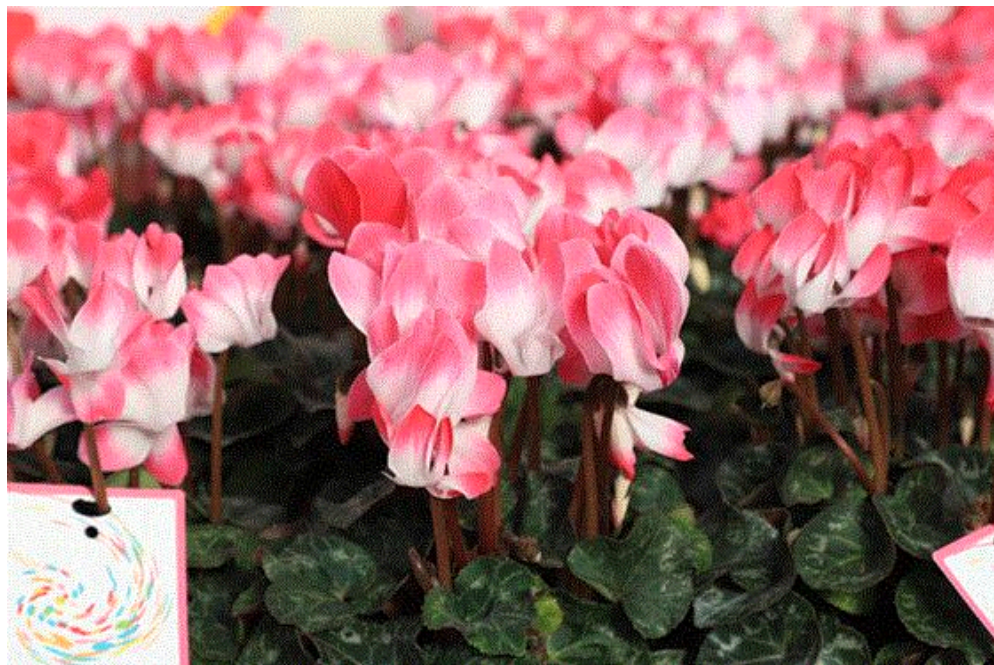
### Star Roses & Plants

**Ellen:** I'll take the new and very unexpected basket item from Star Roses & Plants: blueberries! They showed two varieties—Midnight Cascade and Sapphire Cascade—that are in a soft launch phase currently and will be good to go for 2021. Blueberries in hanging baskets? Sure. It may be a crop that takes nine to 12 months to produce, but when grown as perennials—produced out in the field and cut back when appropriate and overwintered—it's a crop with a market that can be pumped for something as unique as a blueberry in a basket. Oh, as far as differences between the two, Midnight Cascade has darker new growth, especially when grown in cooler conditions.



## Morel

**Chris:** Last, but hardly least, is a cyclamen series from Morel called Indiaka. Named for an international game played with a feathered shuttlecock, Indiaka has unique flowers that fade from white to Salmon, Rose, Bright Purple and Magenta. The series is a midi size, and comes with nice POP and even a consumer website, [indiaka.cyclamen.com](http://indiaka.cyclamen.com).



Well, Ellen, that was a super quick tour of the Ball companies—too quick, really, for the number of introductions they offered. To see more, check out our videos in the links above and check out the videos we'll be posting in the next week or so.

**Ellen:** We're done! Well, done with Day 1 anyway. We'll be back in your inbox Sunday morning with a roundup of what we saw at the GreenFuse Botanicals and GroLink stops—which amounts to about approximately 1,034 individual companies. I exaggerate, but not by much. What time is our wake-up call tomorrow, Mr. B?

**Chris:** Breakfast at Carrow's tomorrow at 7:30 a.m., first stop by 8:30 a.m., writing by 7:00 p.m., hit send by midnight. That's the drill for the next five nights. You up to it, Boston?

**Ellen:** Yoga in my hotel room at 5:45 a.m., followed by meditation. Coffee and a shower and then I'm good to go. We'll see you all back here tomorrow. Comments, questions, suggestions? Let us know at the links in our names below.

**Chris:** Thanks for reading!

Chris and Ellen

Chi Ellen

Chris Bytes

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