

Spring Trials - Just one more day!

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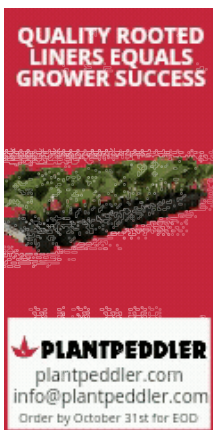
IN THIS EDITION

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30 YEARS wave

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Tuesday? Then it's Gilroy

Chris: If it's Tuesday, this must be Gilroy, Ellen!

Ellen: You can say that for Wednesday and Thursday, too. We're here in the Gilroy area for a few days, spying on flowers in the area. It's nice to stay in one spot for a few days, isn't it, Chris?

Chris: Absolutely. No packing and unpacking, which means more time for writing and editing videos. There's only one problem we've encountered here at the Hampton Inn and that's sketchy Internet. I'm afraid our readers may have encountered a problem with a couple of the videos we uploaded—or thought we had uploaded—to YouTube. Sorry about that! So we're making up for it by giving it another try (there's one uploading in the background as I write this), and hopefully, you'll be able to click the links below to see the videos associated with each trial:

Hem Genetics
Sakata
Beekenkamp
Vista Farms
Monrovia
Star Roses & Plants
HilverdaKooij

That said, Ellen, we had three stops on this penultimate day of Spring Trials. How about we start where we started—Syngenta—and each share a few of our favorite new varieties?



Let's talk Syngenta

Ellen: A good plan, my man. I'd have to start with a new addition to Top Hat, a big and beautiful begonia series they premiered last year. Rose Bicolor joins the other Top Hats, all of which have flowers that are just about 20% bigger than other *sempervirens* begonias. Pink is their biggest seller in the series, but with a bicolor as beautiful as this, it'll have some competition. They've also developed POP for retail—for carts and such—that tell consumers what all they can do and be successful with Top Hat. Oh, and Chris, say a word or two about that PGR trials they had set up for it, if you would please.



Chris: Yup, it's nice to see a "trial" at the Trials: in this case, Syngenta showed various regimes of paclobutrazol (Bonzi) applied on Top Hats in a 306 pack, with a drench of 0.25 ppm doing a good job.

As for my pick, I know you left it for me to write about since I've already done a lot of reporting about them: Imara XDR. This is Syngenta's new IDM (impatiens downy mildew)-resistant impatiens series. They're the first IDM-resistant impatiens to get a global release—PanAmerican's Beacon is released in select markets this year and globally next year. To show its powers against IDM, they had the Imara XDR and some control impatiens locked in a clear plastic box that had been inoculated with the disease. The controls were either dead or starting to show symptoms (depending upon age), while Imara looked just fine. The series starts with nine colors and a mix.



Oh, if I haven't mentioned it, XDR means "extra disease resistance" and is a label they'll be adding to other crops, such as Cora XDR—Cora has been upgraded to be resistant to at least 10 different phythophthora strains.



A beautiful dahlia

Ellen: Cool, so I get to talk about my favorite item of Syngenta's trials: the new dahlia called Sincerity. It's from breeding they acquired via their acquisition last year of Verwer, a Dutch dahlia specialist. Dahlias may not be a churn-and-burn crop, but they're a gorgeous crop overall and this one is specifically a winner in the beauty department. Not only is it pretty, it's got a great habit and a giant flower size.



Should I also mention the new stand-alone lantana called Hot Blooded? Other than its super-intense orange-to-hot-red color, its versatility takes it from 2.5-quart pots to patio planters to landscapes. And it's sterile, which means it won't cycle in and out of color. In other words, this is one hot item.



Chris: What I liked about Hot Blooded—I mean, besides the plant itself, which was impressive for its deep red color—was the rock music-inspired display, complete with small drum set ... which me and a couple of other guys at the trial employed for a friendly drum-off. Jen Zurko's video camera was rolling the whole time; you can catch the drum action [HERE](#).

Oh, but back to my last pick at Syngenta: The Varinova cyclamen partnership. Varinova is a Dutch cyclamen breeder that's exhibited for many years (including this one) along with Danziger. Now they've struck up a partnership with Syngenta, which gets the North American exclusive on any of their cyclamen varieties. Syngenta has thus far selected two: Merita, an intermediate size cyclamen that will most likely eventually replace the old Laser series; and Contiga, a standard-sized series.

Want to see all these and even more? Then watch our Bobblehead video [HERE](#)!

Alright, Ellen, it's Proven Winners time!



Proven Winners annuals

Ellen: Luckily, we got to Proven Winners after the flood. Apparently, they had a foot or two of water out in the display area several days ago. A little plywood for walkways solved the footing

problem, though.

Anyway, back to the matter at hand—plants! We'll start with their annuals, shall we? And I'll begin with the new intros in the Proven Harvest vegetable program introduced last year. They have two strong intros: First, a hot pepper called Fire Away Hot & Heavy—a patio plant-sized, jalapeño-type pepper that provides a “smooth heat,” they say. Fruits are small, about 2 to 3 in. and they're all a beautiful red color, too.



The second is a compact tomato called Goodhearted with fruits that are somewhat heart-shaped—the breeding is from Dutch company PRUDAC, which specializes in these extra-small tomatoes, so that makes sense. It's a basket item, and at a Brix value of 9, it's a sweet one at that.

Chris: Figures, Ellen, that when we cover a flower company you go straight for the veggies. Me, I'll go for a new flower and a heat-lover at that—that's a brand-new class to Proven Winners: Pentas SunStar. This is a “big and beefy” vegetative pentas with strong stems, big umbels of flowers and big flowers. Available in four good colors, SunStar is said to grow well in the spring, too, not just in the heat of summer. Is this the only vegetative pentas on the market? Maybe—let us know if we're wrong.



Ellen: Speaking of new classes to Proven Winners, they also premiered a helianthus—AKA sunflower. It's the hottest plant around—it's been a rock star for floral forever and is now the "it" plant for containers and beds. Sunbelievable, Proven Winners' version of it, is a sturdy plant, has course foliage and grows into a beautiful brancher with just one pinch and a dose of Bonzi. Blooms upwards of two months longer than competing varieties.



Chris: Let me hit two topics: First, if you miss Supertunia Raspberry Blast, lost to the orange gene debacle, then rejoice that there's somewhat of a replacement: Supertunia Raspberry Rush. Granted, it's not exactly the same flower color or plant habit, but it's not bad.



Second is the world premiere of the Proven Winners/Classic Caladiums licensing agreement, which brings 20 of Classic's best caladiums into the Proven Winners lineup. You'll be able to get either bulbs or liners, all shipped direct from Classic. A couple of notes about the bulbs: they will come de-eyed, which means you'll get lots of even growth instead of a strong central stem and smaller side shoots. And the biggest feature of all: a shot of paint to help inexperienced employees identify which end is up. Talk about a time-saver—it's genius!



Here's a [VIDEO](#) of the annual highlights from Proven Winners.



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On to Perennials

Ellen: Genius idea indeed! But that's what results when a company puts effort into helping their customers, am I right?

Okay, on to perennials from Proven Winners' partner Walters Gardens. I paid particular attention because I have a new 1/2-acre yard to landscape. For which I want the two new brunneras: Jack of Diamonds, with more of a green pattern, and Queen of Hearts, predominantly silver-leaved. Big leaves at 9 to 11 in. in size and both are resistant to leaf spot. Chris lamented the fact their forget-me-not-esque blue flowers are confined to such a short time in spring.



Chris: Those bright blue flowers really grabbed me. As did the colorful foliage of their new Japanese Painted Fern called Crested Surf. These Zone 4 shade-lovers feature a more vigorous habit and richer variegation than typical Japanese ferns; in addition, they sport an interesting split at the end of each frond.



Ellen: Moving on to woodies from Proven Winners ColorChoice, I was so excited to see a pieris! Every place I've ever lived has had an andromeda bush (AKA lily of the valley bush) somewhere nearby, so seeing their version—Interstella—was awesome. Throw in the fact that it has a bicolor flower, grows to about 5-ft. tall and is a deer-resistant broadleaf evergreen, and I'm in love.



Chris: Me, too—especially the broadleaf evergreen part. My yard has been too brown and gray this winter.

Another good choice from ColorChoise is dwarf weigela My Monet Purple Effect. It's a long name for a pretty variegated shrub that they call an improvement over My Monet. It's a bit faster to grow, flowers better and its narrow white variegation is a bit less prone to burn. It's a Zone 4 to 6 perennial.



Ellen: Broadleaf evergreens are a critical element to a non-boring northern winter yard, Chris. But let's talk about a non-boring seasonal patio for a moment. Proven Winners ColorChoice is rolling out a new program called Decked Out. It features shrubs (at first, likely perennials soon thereafter) that'll turn a deck into a non-boring—dare I say it, a very exciting!—entertaining space. Retailers and their suppliers can choose their own deco pots (within certain parameters), but the overall effort is to put premium plants into really nice pots. It's a soft roll-out in just a few markets for now, with it getting bigger and more extensive in 2020. I'm interested in where this program can go.

To see these perennials and woody live ... well, live on video, click [HERE](#).



Danziger

Chris: We could have written several newsletters just on Proven Winners (I could do 500 words on lunch alone), but it's time to head back into town and Danziger, which for years has leased space at Headstart Nursery, located right behind Garlic World. They, too, had loads of new intros, all arranged in tidy, perfectly labeled rows—it's always the easiest trial to negotiate.

Best of the best at Danziger would have to include Vanessa Verbena Compact. It's a new subseries of Verbena Vanessa, which Danziger introduced a few years ago as a powdery mildew-resistant, non-stop-blooming verbena. Compact is just as its name implies: it's suited for quart

pots and fills out a patio pot nicely, with no ungainly branching. The subseries offers eight colors.



Ellen: Let's talk petunias. They showed us several, starting with three new colors to the Capella series: Ruby Red, Baby Pink and the talk of the town, Neon Pink (all three pictured below). They fill pots, yet are compact. A few additions to other series include: Red and Purple Ice in the cascading Cascadias; Pink, Fluttering Hearts and King of Hearts in the heart-stamped Amore series; Buttercream in the Littletonia series; and Pistachio Cream in the Ray series.



Chris: Good choices. I will wrap up Danziger with something I almost never write about: an improvement. But, hey, when you improve one of your top sellers, it's a big deal. That's the case with Bacopa Gulliver Improved, which now has even bigger flowers and more branching (which equates to more flowers).



What's next?

Chris: Well, Ellen, that about sums up Day 5. I know we left out a lot, but did we forget anything critical?

Ellen: More than likely. But you know what? We can always include a “Hey, I had time to think about it and I really loved XYZ” in our weekly newsletters. My next *buZZ!* is coming out this Friday and, having to hang out for 10 hours at the San Jose airport until my redeye home to Boston, I'm positive I will find a few things to talk about. We'll cover all things critical in time, no worries about that.

Wrap it up, boss. Where are we off to tomorrow, Chris?

Chris: Day 6, the last day, the final day, the wrap up, but no less important, as we hit Pacific Plug & Liner, Benary and the very interesting Israeli breeding companies. No telling what to expect, especially with Benary. I mean, one year we were riding bicycles in front of a video screen; another we were taking helicopter rides over the nursery. Stay tuned for our next adventure, everybody. And as always, click our names below to share your questions and comments.

Chris and Ellen

Handwritten signatures of Chris and Ellen in black ink.

Chris Bytes

Editor & Publisher

GrowerTalks and Green Profit

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