

Spring Trials: Day 2, and more new flowers!

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What would have been Day 2 ...

Chris: Greetings, new variety enthusiast, and welcome to Day 2 of the 2020 California Spring Trials (CAST) ... or at least what would have been Day 2 had there actually been a CAST ... we at *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* are doing our best to pretend it took place and we were there. In fact, I'm sipping on a glass of good California pinot as we speak ... and is that the sound of the Pacific Ocean along the Ventura coastline I hear?

Ellen: For me, that water sound is rain from a late-season Nor'Easter. Gosh, I do miss being in California this time of year.

Chris: Just turning spring-like here in Chicago, finally. Okay, Day 2 ... we told you yesterday about how we're doing this six-day newsletter coverage of the new varieties from what would have been the California Spring Trials. Today we would have gone to two different Trials sites: Green Fuse Botanicals in Santa Paula (right around the corner from the Ball Trials, which we visited yesterday) where we'd have seen Green Fuse, Westhoff, PAC and Schoneveld. Then up the road about 20 miles to a new stop, Seaside Gardens, in Carpinteria, to visit PlantHaven and Suntory. We're making one minor change to that: We are holding off reporting on Green Fuse's new varieties for a day or two, as company owner Steve Jones is still working on getting us professional videos and pictures from his trial.

Ellen: Wow, that would have been a lot to cover in one day—good thing we're sitting pretty at home and watching all of the new variety introductions via Zoom. Although, in our conversation with Robert Bett of PlantHaven, Seaside Gardens has a real-live botanical garden we missed out on seeing. Bummer. Woulda enjoyed that! Note for next year: Schedule in 30 minutes to roam the botanical garden with abandon.

Chris: For sure! But to make this easier on you AND me, how about we delegate the variety-writing duties to our newest Bobblehead, Bill Calkins? Bill, take it away!

Bill: I'm a lucky guy. Honestly. It's with a sense of extreme gratitude that I open my laptop to write about our Day 2 Spring Trials stops. Not only do I get to work with the best Bobbleheads in the business—Chris, Ellen and Jen—but I also get to cover FOUR companies introducing series and varieties that represent a wide spectrum of the industry. As Chris said, today I'm covering Suntory, Westhoff, PlantHaven and Schoneveld. We get to check out Spring Trials intros ranging from crazy-colored annuals with tremendous consumer appeal and breakthrough grower solutions to perennials hardy all the way to Zone 3, plus southern heat-lovers. Why not throw in some succulents for good measure? Let's get started.



Suntory adds to the arsenal

First up is Suntory, where we talked with Delilah Onofrey and learned that the current focus is on introductions that strengthen their existing core series and collections. It makes sense. The best teams always look to bolster rosters by adding more depth to positions of strength.

Perfect examples of this are two new additions to the *Catharanthus Soiree Kawaii* series (you know, those tiny-flowered vincas). Blueberry Kiss is a stunner, the first in the series to enter the blue spectrum of colors. And Coral Reef adds another tropical color with a more compact habit to fit a slightly different profile in the garden.



Catharanthus Soiree Kawaii Coral Reef

In Surfinia Petunia, new Purple Heart brings another heart-shaped center to the series. We agree with Delilah that it will be excellent in baskets and containers for cause-marketing campaigns supporting Armed Service members.



Petunia Surfinia Purple Heart

New for the much-loved Senetti series is a brilliant Violet with contrasting white centers that comes to North America after success in Europe. It matches well with Ruby Red and can be produced for early spring sales.



Bracteantha Granvia Gold

After sharing the strong additions to series known well in our industry, Delilah was excited to tell us about a new bracteantha named Granvia Gold. This super-sized strawflower will look amazing as a premium specimen in large patio containers or gardens. In fact, I think it would look really nice on my patio. Good thing I live five miles from Delilah ... but I digress.

Anyway, for a slideshow that Delilah made showing these introductions and more, click [HERE](#).



A Sweet Treat



Westhoff and PAC modernize genetics

Not only did Bart Hayes wear a tie for our virtual tour of his Spring Trials stop (check out his splendor in this [NEW VARIETY VIDEO](#) he made just for us), but he also brought the Westhoff and PAC geraniums A-game in terms of genetics. Where do I start? How about we get crazy with petunias.



Westhoff set up a rough example of their trial to help us report on it.

Bart explained that one of his goals is to help growers sort out the Crazytunia collection that now includes more than 50 colors and patterns. For instance, now there's a Cosmic group/gang/clique with purple star patterns on huge blooms perfect for 4-in. pots and baskets due to their mounding and upright habits. New for this year is Cosmic Pink, which we all really liked because of its bright and fun color pattern.

Another gang within the Crazytunia range are the Friskys, with cream-colored star patterns, which add Frisky Red, Frisky Violet and Frisky Purple this year. The third Crazytunia from Westhoff this year is Blackberry Jam, which might be the coolest of the bunch—it fits into a Blackberry group.



Petunia Crazytunia Blackberry Jam

Not in the Crazy collection, but certainly not subdued, are two standalone petunias called Peach Bellini and Retro Red. Peach Bellini is one of the earliest introductions from Westhoff's orange petunia breeding being done traditionally now, ever since the whole orange petunia fiasco a couple years ago. Retro Red is a new type for Westhoff, an aggressive trailer for big baskets. Bart says this is the start of a series to come.



Petunia Peach Bellini

Let's move to calibrachoa starting with two new introductions to the Chameleon series—Frozen Ice and Blackberry Pie. The third new calibrachoa is a standalone, Firewalker, that can be considered a companion to the existing Skywalker due to its sharp terracotta-style color and excellent habit.

Westhoff introduces its first osteospermum series this year, Gelato. Bart says it's a modern, compact, but heavy flowering, series that will work well in formats from 4-in. to gallons. The series launches with six colors and our favorite is Cranberry. I can't imagine it staying on the bench for very long in early spring.

How about a full series of tuberous begonias from seed? Westhoff has you covered with Begonia Prism, a 14-color series that's 10% to 15% more vigorous than the market leader, Nonstop. Bart says Prism will finish sooner with flowers that hold above the foliage, continuing to raise the breeding bar on tuberous begonias.



Prism Begonias

Lastly, Westhoff showcased 18 new multiliner combinations for the Passion Combos collection, now numbering 38. The current focus is on novelty components like their patterned petunias and calibrachoas, and includes many FanciFillers foliage items. These are foliage accents selected to be compact for mixed containers, adding to the balance and form.



PlantHaven covers all bases

Robert Bett invited the Bobblehead gang to enter the wild world of PlantHaven, where they're always on the lookout for breeders around the world developing unique items, while also conducting their own breeding programs, all in the quest for garden performers for today's shopper.

He started by introducing two new *Cuphea igneas*, a large-flowered species from Australia known for its heat and humidity tolerance. First up is Cuphea Blackberry Sparkler blooming with bright and vivid white flowers and red-black tips on a more compact plant that looks great in mixes.



Cuphea Hummingbird's Lunch

Next is Cuphea Hummingbird's Lunch. We love the name—and it's fitting, too: Robert claims nine

out of 10 hummingbirds go straight to it. As of press time, we haven't heard back from any hummingbirds to confirm, but looking at the plant, we have no reason to doubt him (the photo makes the plant look bigger than it is; it grows 12- to 24-in. tall).

After leaving Australian breeding, Robert took us to New Zealand for the market's first cactus-flowered dahlia with dark foliage. Dahlia Electro Pink is phenomenal. This variety requires no staking, and for growers, it branches after one pinch, growing up to 3-ft. tall in landscapes, making a statement with its 4-in. blooms. Trials show it can be grown for fall sales, too, creating a nice opportunity to complement your garden mum assortment. Root Electro Pink cuttings from Weeks 14 to 20 and send them to market in autumn. Robert told us he's currently evaluating experimentals, which means a series may be on the way soon.



Dahlia Electro Pink

The Dianthus American Pie series is up next—a scented perennial dianthus from world-class Whetman breeding from Devon in the U.K. With large blooms up to 3-in. across and a modern color range, Cherry Pie is the new addition unveiled at Spring Trials. Growers in just about any region appreciate that once transplanted from a 72-liner to a gallon pot, these dianthus can be placed outside in unheated houses for the winter, emerging healthy for spring sales.

PlantHaven also introduced a hardy scented dianthus that Robert calls the "Holy Grail" of fragrant dianthus. It's the first yellow dianthus from the Pinks program, bred by Whetman. New Dianthus Hello Yellow has blue foliage and soft yellow—you might say chardonnay-colored—flowers. It's hardy to Zone 5.



Dianthus Hello Yellow

Hens 'N Chicks fans know that sempervivum tend to look best in winter when few people are out admiring their gardens. The first three intros in PlantHaven's new SemperSemp collection bring the color interest forward to summer, with an added bonus of super-sized plants that are faster to finish than others on the market. Plant a 72-liner in an 8-in. pot and in 20 weeks, you'll have a saleable 8-in. rosette filling the pot.

Gardeners love pillar-type plants in pots and baskets and new Towers of Flowers Weigela is a vertical, easy-care plant that flowers from top to bottom. Available in Cherry and Apple Blossom, growers can expect a saleable gallon in six to 12 weeks from a 21-cell liner.



Tower of Flowers Weigela

Finally, PlantHaven introduced a supply chain solution for gaillardia, bringing tissue culture plants directly from a lab in Poland to licensed rooting stations ready to go. Robert says with the REALFLOR Compact series there's no issue getting uniform vegetative material for production, requiring only one pinch. Look for Sunset Cutie, Sunset Flash and Sunset Snappy to start off the series.

For a good video Robert made showing all these varieties, [CLICK HERE](#).



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Cyclamen and more

Cyclamen experts Schoneveld didn't disappoint this year, bringing two new heat-tolerant series to market. Elegante and Leopardo are new series for 2020, bred in Southern Italy and trialed and tested in hot climates. Elegante is a midi size, ideal for 4-in. and quarts, with a compact, uniform habit and excellent flower power showing no heat delay in Southern gardens. It's introduced with seven colors.



The new Leopardo series of cyclamen.

Leopardo is larger, suited for 6-in. and gallon production. We learned that Schoneveld breeding focuses on high leaf count because every cyclamen leaf has the potential for a bloom.



VERANO

ELEGANTE

LEOPARDO

Size guide showing their existing Verano series, and the new Elegante and Leopardo series.

Beyond cyclamen, Schoneveld is excited to introduce new members of their *Primula acaulis* series named Paradiso, with three types—early, mid and late season. Each includes excellent genetics, but brings a different grower solution to the table. The early group, with new Appleblossom, requires no cold treatment, allowing growers in cooler climates (like Mountain states) to grow Paradiso to hit earlier dates in May. The late group, with new Violet Bicolor, gives those same growers opportunities to ship in fall. The mid group is for standard primula timing. Schoneveld feels these three differentiated groups help growers extend the primula season.



Next up: Day 3!

Bill: As I wrap up Day 2 coverage, let me give a shout out to *GrowerTalks* and *Green Profit's* social media profiles with even more #CAST2020 information. Follow Spring Trials on Facebook at www.facebook.com/springtrials/ and on [Instagram](#) @growertalksgreenprofit. Both are fun resources to share with your team to stay up to date on the virtual action.

Chris: Thanks, young William! Glad to have you back ... you know, folks, it was Bill and I back in 2005, I think, who invented this daily email from the Trials. Alrighty then, tomorrow, Day 3, and I know for sure we'll be covering Dümme Orange and Kientzler. Will there be more? Only time will tell! See you there.

Chris, Ellen, Jen & Bill

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