

CAST Day One: Ball Horticultural Company

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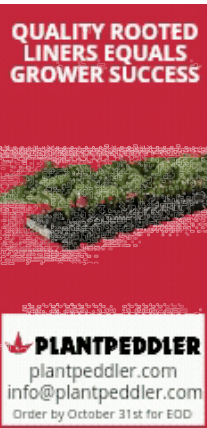
IN THIS EDITION

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Ball FloraPlant
Selecta
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Kieft Seed
BloomStudios

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Chris: Hey, Ell ... er, I mean, hey, Bill!

Bill: Hey, boss! I hope you're okay with a newbie taking over Bobblehead duties from a pro like Ellen. No lie, I'm a bit intimidated.

Chris: Newbie! The folks may not remember unless they've been reading me since 2006 or so, but you and I were the original Bobbleheads covering the California trials via a daily e-newsletter, *Acres of Buzz!* Welcome back!

For those of you wondering where Ellen went, don't worry—she's alive and well in Boston. She's simply sitting out this year's California new varieties event. So I've brought along Bill Calkins, our Tech On Demand editor, to help out with the writing and video duties.

Bill: And we hit the ground running on Day One. Back into the groove with pen and notepad in hand. Let's get this party started!

Chris: Hold your horses, young William. I just wanted to tell the folks that, while Ellen tended to focus on retail and veggies, you're our Tech On Demand technical expert, tapping into the crop culture specialists for those little cultural tips that can help you grow a better crop.

Okay, that said, Day One was all the Ball Companies—which we listed at the top. Bill, why don't you dive in by starting where we started, with Ball FloraPlant.



Let's Do It ... Ball FloraPlant

Bill: Let's do it. Lead project manager Massy Sanaei led us through the assortment starting with ColorRush Petunias, bred for vigor and landscape performance. New this year are ColorRush Red and ColorRush Yellow. They looked large and in charge, adding to the series. We also saw Merlot Star Improved, a nice upgrade.

We moved on to an all-new series, but were stopped in our tracks by a cool display for Bee's Knees. It's not new for 2022, but showed such success this year right out of the gate I don't want to skip it in this coverage. If you didn't try Bee's Knees Petunia last year, definitely put it on your order this time around.

Chris, why don't you give our readers the details on CannonBall?

Chris: CannonBall is an all-new series and the name should give you a clear idea of its habit: ball-shaped. In fact, Massy admitted Dümmer Orange's Potunia was the target of this roundy-moundy series. CannonBall can be grown pot-tight, has a narrow seven-day bloom window and shows good cold tolerance, they say. The series starts with seven colors. Oh, it'll be replacing the SunSpun series.



Petunia CannonBall.

Right by it was another roundy-moundy new series, Lantana Shamrock. As a former Florida grower, I'm always looking for good new heat-tolerant annuals and Shamrock fits the bill. It's got a controlled, mounding habit. The series—which joins Lucky and Little Lucky (hence the name), starts with four colors: White, Orange Flame, Peach and Rose.

Bill: Bumble Bee Hot Pink is a super-cool calibrachoa flower pattern that will be perfect as a novelty in monoculture baskets and pots. The center is vivid yellow surrounded by dark purple and bright pink tones. You have to see it to appreciate its uniqueness.

Coleus Spitfire has a profile that's new to me. Ball FloraPlant calls it a "micro coleus" and that description makes sense when you see it next to standard sun coleus varieties. It's very

compact. I can see it being used as a front border in the ground or in pots on patio tables. It also looked nice in a window box in the CAST vignette. It'll be interesting to see where this little guy finds a home in grower programs. Maybe even as an indoor foliage item?

Chris: Interesting to see something promoted as “micro” in a “bigger-is-better” world. But Bill did a good Tech On Demand video with Ball's James Doukas on how to grow Spitfire properly and keep it's compact habit. Watch for it!

To see these Ball FloraPlant varieties, via video, click [HERE](#).



More New Annuals ... and Perennials!

Okay, on to Ball's other vegetative annual division, Selecta, which introduced two all-new series. First up is Beats Verbena. What was their catch-phrase, Bill?

Bill: It never misses a beat of color.

Chris: Right. Selecta listed quite a few attributes of Beats, including: it's the earliest verbenas on the market, by two weeks; it needs no pinch and no PGRs; it can be grown in nearly any pot size, from packs to tubs; and it's “hyper-uniform.” The series starts with six colors and two Trixi mixes.



Verbena Beats.

Bill: A few years ago, Selecta introduced the world to Night Sky, a first-of-its-kind spotted novelty petunia that took the world by storm. That opened up a new market for such color patterns. Now they're adding Sky types into their existing series of petunias. New for 2022 are Headliner Enchanted Sky and Starlet Midnight Sky. Enchanted Sky brings two patterns to the table: the characteristic “sky” spots and a star pattern in the middle of the flower. Midnight Sky, meanwhile, is a deep, velvety purple with a constellation of stars throughout. And here's a Tech Tip for you: cooler night temps mean more spots on the blooms.

Click [HERE](#) for a Selecta video.

Chris: That's just a small sampling of the annuals from Ball. How about some perennials, starting with Kieft Seed, which, as the name implies, provides seed-bred perennials. Two for 2022 include: Lobelia Starship Rose, which joins Starship Scarlet, Blue, Burgundy and Scarlet Bronze Leaf, which were all introduced last year. This *L. speciosa* has strong colors and a uniform habit that attracts hummingbirds and butterflies; and Leucanthemum White Lion, an early blooming Shasta daisy that only needs 10 hours of daylight to initiate flowers. It's quite similar to Leucanthemum Madonna, which is later to flower, needing 14 ½ hours of daylight to flower.

[HERE](#) is a look at these via video.



Vegetative Perennials from Darwin

Bill, how about taking us through the vegetative perennials division of Ball, Darwin?

Bill: I can do that. I appreciate Darwin's breeding prowess. This year, an all-new series of buddleia called Chrysalis caught our eyes. Like a lot of introductions these days, the habit was more compact than traditional varieties, resulting in excellent flower power. The five colors in the series—White, Blue, Cranberry, Pink and Purple—will bloom all season long. Chris, I'm handing this one off to you. The artemisia. What'd you think of it?

Chris: SunFern, they call it, because it looks like a fern, but takes full, hot sun. It's *Artemisia gmelinii* ... the g is silent; pronounce it like "Millennial," but with the double i on the end. No flowers—it's grown for its fern-like foliage, which is non-invasive and tidy. Use it as a compact groundcover or even in full-sun containers where you want that ferny texture. There are two SunFerns: Olympia is a bit taller and greener than Arcadia, which is more gray-green. Darwin said they're even testing it as a leatherleaf fern alternative!



Artemisia SunFern.

Bill: It's an interesting plant, for sure. But let's get back to more common crops, like heuchera. Shoppers are always interested in what's new with this traditional shade perennial, available in a range of colors. New for 2022 are two from Darwin—Cinnamon Stick and Burgundy Blast join the Carnival series and will go into gallon pots and larger. Big Top Caramel Apple kicks off what could be a future series that's much larger than Carnival with large foliage and a big habit. New foliage starts off red or burgundy and matures to caramel.



Heuchera Big Top Caramel Apple.

To check these varieties out via video, click [HERE](#). Mr. Beytes, where are we off to next?

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E3: A New Wave!



E3 Easy Wave Petunia.

Chris: PanAmerican Seed, our host for the day, where we saw the traditional seed annuals that started this whole event back when it was ... wait for it ... Pack Trials! Lots we could talk about, but I'll focus on two highlights. First, an addition to the Wave series called E3 Easy Wave. Bill, remind me what the three Es are—I can never remember ...

Bill: Early. Efficient. Evolution!

Chris: There ya go. In a nutshell, E3 blooms under 10-hour or less days, making it ideal for southern growers doing winter petunia production. But all growers will appreciate its dome-shaped habit. It offers five colors. And for those who are curious, there are now five different Wave series: Wave, Easy Wave, Shock Wave, Tidal Wave and now E3 Easy Wave (not counting Cool Wave, which is a pansy, not a petunia).

Bill: With *Impatiens walleriana* back on benches around the world, thanks to Impatiens Downy Mildew-resistant varieties like Beacon, the color range continues to expand. PanAm adds Rose to the assortment this year, bringing with it a new Formula Mix. The series is up to seven colors and two mixes. We were also reminded that since October 2020, Beacon seed has been only available in coated form—no raw seed. But the price didn't change!

Speaking of landscape solutions, PanAm also showed a new color in their Jolt interspecific dianthus series—Purple—positioned with the rest of the series for gallon pot production and durable summer performance.

To see these and many more PanAm annuals in our Bobblehead video, click [HERE](#).



Veggies, Cuts and We're Outta Here

Chris: Normally, I'd hand off PanAm's veggies to Ellen, she being the avid veggie gardener among us. But hey, I can grow a mean tomato, too, so I'm qualified to talk about PanAm's HandPicked Veggie introductions. There were four tomatoes: Bellatrix, a late blight-resistant, determinate Roma tomato; Marzito, an indeterminate grape tomato that's good for both snacking and sauces; Loki, a leaf mold-resistant slicing tomato; and Dark Star, an F1 beefsteak that's got a purple heirloom look and taste with modern hybrid vigor and disease resistance.

And there were four peppers, including three Peppi seedless peppers: Peppi Cornissimo, a large red grilling type; plus Peppi Yellow and Peppi Red, which are snack-size peppers. Lastly, there's Candy Cane Chocolate Cherry, a striped sweet pepper in which the stripes remain throughout every stage of maturity, from green to a deep chocolate color.

Lastly, there were two Kitchen Minis tomato intros: Cocoa and Red Velvet. Kitchen Minis are bred to be grown and sold in the same small pot that the consumer can enjoy in their home—much like they'd buy a pot of basil or chives in the produce section of the grocery store.

We've got a video of the HandPicked veggies [HERE](#).

Bill: We've seen new series, new varieties, new colors ... and a now a new business unit for Ball. BloomStudios is all about cut flowers from the perspective of new product development, cultural and technical resources, and sales and marketing support. It's interesting to see resources being applied to the cut flower market both domestically and globally to help move the needle and get more cut flowers into the hands of today's shoppers.

BloomStudios has quite a few intros for 2022, but three were standouts: Katz Hi Double White is a matthiola (stock) with 90%-plus double flowers, upping the game quite a bit because single flowered stems end up being culled out and dumped. Marigold Xochi Orange (pronounce it "so-chee") is a tall, large-flowered cut marigold with a rich orange color and strong stems. And in the popular Potomic Snapdragon series, Dark Pink replaces Rose. Check out all three in this [VIDEO](#).



BloomStudio's Scott Rusch.

Did I forget anything, boss?

Chris: Only to tell the readers where we'll be tomorrow (Wednesday): First, at the Green Fuse location where we'll see them, Beekenkamp, Hem Genetics, Schonevend and Westhoff; and then at Armstrong Growers, the hosts for PlantHaven, Suntory and Vivero. It'll be a full and varied day!

Bill: I can't wait! Already feeling like a Bobblehead once again. Thanks for taking it easy on me in print and video. Tomorrow we'll be running like a well-oiled machine, which is good because that's a packed schedule.

Chris: As always, click our names below to comment on the coverage and the new varieties. See you tomorrow with Day Two of the California Summer Trials!

Thanks for reading! See you next time,

Chris, Jen & Bill

Chi Ellen Jen Bill

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