California Spring Trials Day 2: Green Fuse & Santa Barbara Polo Club



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Who's at Green Fuse?

Chris: This is Day 2 of our five-day coverage of CAST in which we recap the best of the best introductions from the world's breeding companies. Today we had two stops, representing almost a dozen breeders, plant introducers and propagators.

Stop #1 was Green Fuse Botanicals, which has a new greenhouse up in the hills of Somis, just southeast of yesterday's stop, PanAmerican Seed. There we saw the varieties from our host, plus German breeder Westhoff, and the Dutch breeders Shoneveld, Beekenkamp and Hem Genetics.

Bill: When it comes to locations, I like the new Green Fuse greenhouse location a lot, up in the California hills and in the middle of a lemon grove. It's also nice to see a range of very different companies with very different product categories in one place.

Chris: Bill, why don't you wax poetic about a few of your favorites from the host of this location, Green Fuse?



Green Fuse Botanicals

Bill: I'm always interested to hear what's coming from Green Fuse—they're super innovative and stay ahead of coming trends. Take arctotis, for example. It's a tough, cool-season groundcover plant with silvery foliage and nice flowers. The new MAJEC series takes it to another level with eight unique colors and possibly the first yellow on the market. This series is ideal for early spring sales, alongside pansies, osteos and other cool crops.



Another breakthrough from Green Fuse is Whisker White Leucanthemum. They've introduced a handful of new daisies in the past few years, but this one stands out as the first daylength neutral "crazy daisy" type. It's Zone 5 hardy, too.

Chris: I've always like gazania as a durable, drought-tolerant groundcover flower and Green Fuse's new one is called SterlingSilver, named for its silvery foliage. The series gets two colors, Yellow and Burgundy Stripe. And adjacent to it was another groundcover-type flower, silene, which they likened to a "summertime *Phlox subulata*." Carol Jean is the series, which comes in Pink and White.



Bill: Most of you will know the Shadow King Rex Begonia collection. New for 2024 is a subseries

within Shadow King called Love, made up of new begonias that are a cross between rex begonias and *B. bowerae*, which are subtropical begonias known for their interesting foliage patterns. Plants are compact and foliage is small. There are five interesting colors: Burgundy Love, Lemon Love, Vintage Love, Lime Love and the uniquely named Turtle Love. They make excellent indoor plants, but can also do well outdoors in the shade.



I'll wrap up Green Fuse with a shout out to their newest multicolored petunia, Double Silver Surprise. This double-flowered variety joins Silver Surprise as a unique variety that produces two different color blooms—silver and rose—on the same plant. It looks like a mixed combo with the economic benefit of just one plant in a basket. Double Silver Surprise has—you guessed it—double flowers.



Westhoff

Chris: Another breeder borrowing space at Green Fuse is Westhoff, the Germany breeder known for the Crazytunia Petunias, with colors unlike those from any other flower breeder, such as Cosmic Violet and Gingersnap (pictured below). I love these!





They've also got a series called Discoball, which features the spotted flowers made popular by Petunia Night Sky. Colors include Pink, Violet and Purple. These patterns come from their own breeding.

Bill: Westhoff is also known for wild calibrachoa patterns and they didn't let us down this year. They showed off a compact little variety called Calico, the first calibrachoa we've seen with variegated foliage; along with Calitastic Cappuccino, with a beautiful light coffee-colored picotee edge, yellow star and an orange-mahogany center.



Another new series—subseries, actually—is HotSpot Lobelia. HotSpot is a genetically dwarf addition to the Hot Lobelias. Its five colors—four different blues and a white—feature big flowers on small plants that require no PGRs. HotSpot is ideal for high-density quart production, but they say they'll continue to grow and develop for the end consumer.

Chris: Lotty Dotty is a silly name for a new four-color hypoestes series. Bill and Jen seemed to think the name came from some sort of rap tune from the '90s ...?

Bill: It's by Snoop Dogg!

Chris: Hmmm. I think it means the foliage has a lot of dots—which it does. These vegetative polka dot plants are more vigorous than their seed counterparts. The collection comes in White, Pink, Rose and Red. Oh, they're all part of Westhoff's Fancy Fillers collection of foliage accent plants.



Hem Genetics & Schoneveld

Bill: In the tent adjacent to the Green Fuse greenhouse we found Dutch breeder Hem Genetics, which is celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. To celebrate, they brought a new daisy to the party, Leucanthemum Arctic Glow. It's first-year flowering and Zone 5 hardy.



Chris: We've seen some interesting herbs coming out of Hem, but none more so than *Rumex flexousus* Twister Copper Red—AKA New Zealand dock or Maori dock. It's a relative of sorrel, with strap-like copper-colored leaves. Bill, you gave it a taste—what did you think?



Checking out the herbs at Hem.

Bill: I think I prefer it as an ornamental herb, boss.

Chris: Fair enough! Okay, take us across the tent to cyclamen specialist Schoneveld.

Bill: You know I like cyclamen, so I was happy to tour the Schoneveld assortment and learn about their newest series, called Fusion. According to tour guide Kathy McKay, this is the first large-flowered bicolor on the market (all others are mid-sized). Fusion starts with Neon Pink.



Chris: It’s always fun to see a breeder launch a series in a new category. For Schoneveld, it’s gerbera and the new Joybera series of seed gerbera. We asked, why gerbera? Their answer? The key problem with current gerbera is uniformity; they're shooting to help bring more uniformity to the class. Joybera, bred for small leaves with short internodes, starts with seven colors and three doubles. They're shooting for three blooms up and two buds coming on every plant.





Beekenkamp

Bill: Another exhibiting company at the Green Fuse site was the Dutch breeder Beekenkamp, known for begonias and dahlias, which dominated the displays. I'll take their dahlias, Chris, and leave begonias to you.

With more than five years of focused breeding for bicolors, dark foliage and varieties that stand out at retail, their dahlia assortment covers all the sizes, from big to small. In the compact Medio series, intended for 5- to 6-in. pots, Beekenkamp launched a lot of new colors in Medio and Medio Fun ("Fun" in the name indicates bicolors).

In the very large Maggiore collection, suited for 8- to 10-in. pots, we saw the stunning new Red Ruffle and Pink/Yellow (below).



Chris: I wrote one thing in my notes for these: “Wow!”

Bill: Lastly, the Grande collection for gallon-sized pots adds three beautiful colors—Coral, Sunrise and Caramel.

Chris: Most of their begonia introductions are so new, they don’t yet have names. Such as Dreams BEEL 4676, which will most likely go into their Dreams Maca collection of outdoor-performing begonias. 4676 is loaded with ruby pink flowers. Adjacent to it was 4684, a compact *elatior*-type in rose pink that’s said to be great for pots or combinations, indoors or out. Here's Kat Volper showing it off.



There's a sister plant in Yellow, No 4681. Lastly, some *boliviensis* types in white, pink and bicolor that will join their Beauvilia series.

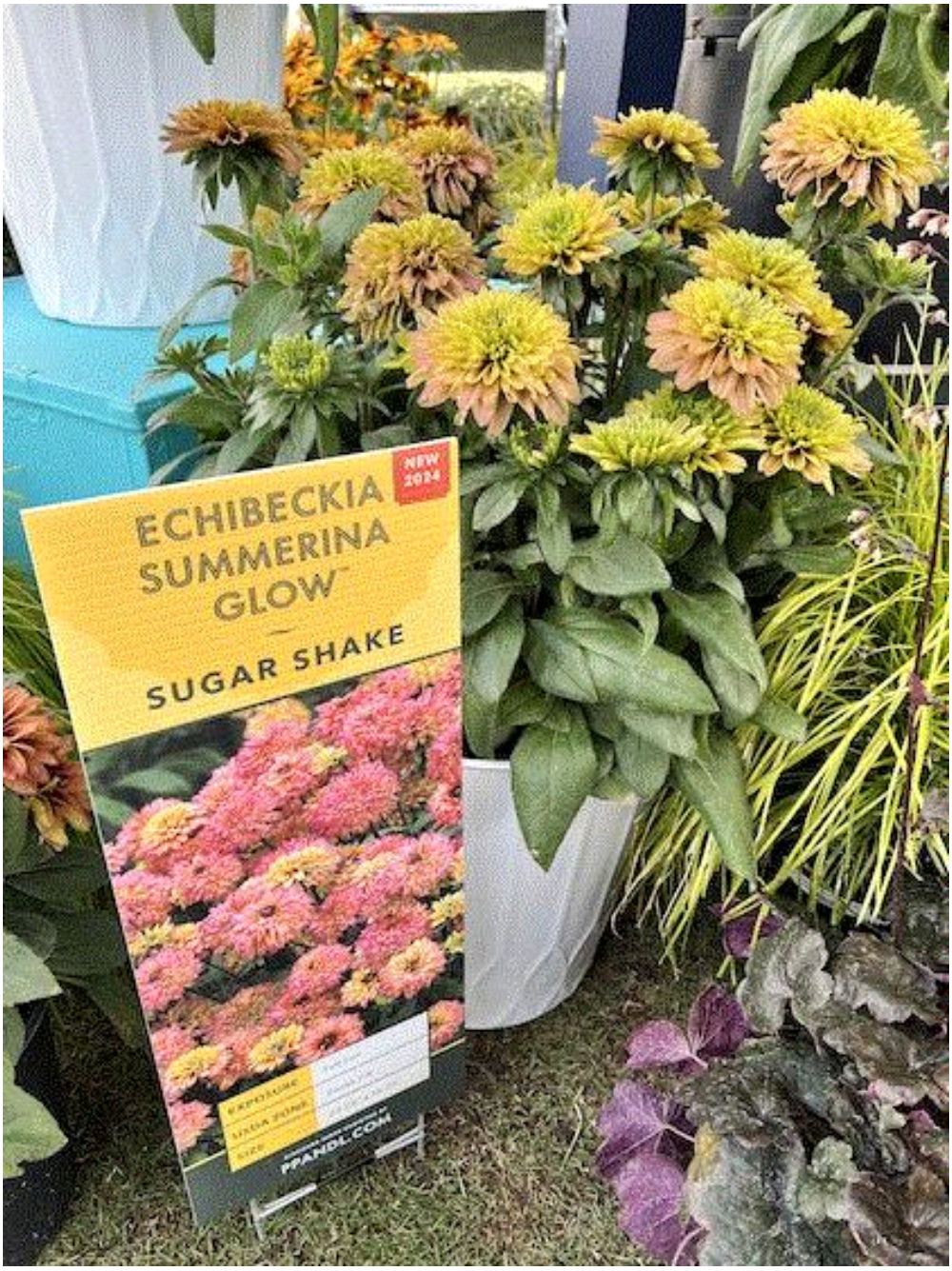


SB Polo Club: PP&L & Suntory

Bill: After lunch at the Green Fuse stop, we made the winding drive 45 minutes up the coast to the Santa Barbara Polo Club—not to watch the ponies, but to see more flowers from four different companies: Pacific Plug & Liner, Suntory, Plant Development Services, Inc. (AKA the Sunset

Magazine and Southern Living Collections), and PlantHaven International. From traditional spring annuals and cool-season crops to shrubs and tropicals, we saw examples of innovation in all the displays.

Chris: Pacific Plug & Liner (AKA PP&L) focused on four crops: delphinium, helleborus, echibeckia and lavender. But the real excitement was in echibeckia with three interesting intros with semi-double to double flowers: Summerina Glow Dizz, Summerina Glow Swoop and Summerina Glow Sugar Shake. The colors are muted autumn tones of yellow and bronze. Sugar Shake is especially interesting for its fully double flowers that resemble mums or dahlias.



Bill: In the Suntory display, we saw intros from some of their most iconic programs, as well as up-and-coming genetics gaining traction with growers every year. For instance, new for the Senetti program were examples of their latest breeding like Lavender Dawn, which looks like a great Easter variety, and Red Halo.



Suntory is constantly adding to their long-standing Surfinia Petunia line; this year they introduced Mounding Patio Party Pink to their compact, upright assortment.

Chris: The Soiree Catharanthus line seems to be doing well and is continuing to grow. For 2024, you can expect new Paprika Red in the Kawaii series of more vigorous varieties, as well as Salsa Red in the Flamenco ruffled, bicolor collection.



Bill: Suntory's Sun Parasols are synonymous with mandevilla, and their new breeding is moving toward varieties with thicker, more durable foliage thought to be more resistant to leaf spots. Giant Peach Sunrise not only has this leaf type, but also beautiful soft peach blooms that will add a nice dimension to the tropical landscape or temperate patio.

I'll close out Suntory with one of my favorite recent series, Granvia Bracteantha, commonly called strawflower. Crimson Sun and White bring the collection up to six colors.

Southern Living & Sunset Magazine

Chris: Next stop in the polo club tents was Plant Development Services Inc., the company behind the Sunset Magazine and Southern Living plant collections, which always shows unique and interesting plants that perform in the regions covered by those publications—which is much of the western and southern U.S.! I pay close attention as a proud Floridian and southerner. This year, I particularly liked their new Yucca Mellow Yellow, a Zone-7 plant with a unique yellow foliage color that's not a stiff eye-poker-outer, like other yuccas. Bill, how about you?



Bill: I'm a born-and-raised Northerner, but I can certainly appreciate the wow-factor of Colocasia Redemption, with that rippled, dark foliage and bright pink center of the leaves. And I must not be the only one because the TC on this variety sold out of limited supply in 2023 and is already on its way to selling out for 2024. If any of our readers want this one, you'd better order ASAP.

The final new variety they showed us today was a variegated aspidistra. Still unnamed as of this writing, it certainly grabbed attention with its maculated foliage. This cast iron plant is at home in dry shade gardens.

PlantHaven

Chris: The last company we toured in the tents at the polo club was PlantHaven, which

represents the unique genetics from small breeders around the world. Like Hem, PlantHaven is also celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2023 (with a big new catalog to help celebrate). Part of their messaging revolved around two crops that have factored in its history: nemesia and diascia. They're launching a new series of nemesia for 2024 called Escential, referencing the fragrance. With five vibrant bicolors—including Elderberry, Zazzleberry, Snowberry, Cherryberry and Sunberry—this series is positioned for anything from jumbo 6-packs, 4-in., quart and gallon pots, all grown sans PGRs.



The range of diascia they showed included a relaunch of Little Diascia, a compact, spreading collection with four colors, as well as a taller, columnar new series named Towers of Flowers. They looked almost foxglove-like, with flower spikes growing up to 8 in. in length. Look for four colors in this series, as well.



Bill: The new Fast-Finish Shrub Program is something PlantHaven is now offering—crops that can be finished in a gallon in as little as 12 weeks from 72-count liners. The program is offered in weigela, abelia and others.

Chris: In the same flowering shrub lineup, I especially like a new buddleia, bred by retired Ball breeder Scott Trees, called Baby Buzz. Finishing in 14 weeks from three inputs to finish, this is a cute, compact butterfly magnet.

And, lastly for the day's coverage. one of Jen Zurko's favorites from PlantHaven can't go unmentioned (especially since she's our final proofreader for *Acres of buZZ!*) was the company's first rose introduction, Serenity Red. It's an adorable little landscape rose perfect for smaller pots.

Bill: Glad you mentioned that rose, Chris. It always pays to keep Jen in our good graces!

Chris: That's for sure! Alrighty then, that's a wrap on Day 2. You may note that there were no video links in the copy above. That's because we've found a handier way to give you the links: down here, at the end, after you're done reading!

- **Green Fuse**
- **Westhoff**
- **Beekenkamp**
- **Suntory**
- **Schoneveld**

Enjoy, and as always, click our names below to comment or offer suggestions. After all, we do this for you!

See you on Day 3!

Thanks for reading! See you next time,

Chris, Jen, Bill & Osvaldo



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