



April 5, 2011

Visiting Ball Hort Pack Trials

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Posted by [Tony Bielaczyc](#)



The entry to BallHort Pack Trials

Off on pleasure bent again, last week I traveled to Santa Paula, California, to visit the BallHort Pack Trials. I know, you're thinking, 'like, is that a running event?' No, it's a chance for nursery people (and lucky gardening editors like me) to see best of the best of what Ball has been working on in its plant-breeding programs and are now ready to introduce to the gardening public. So, everything that has been selected for color, growing habit, flower form, disease resistance, all the things we want a plant to be, are shown to whet appetites and get creative juices flowing. And I saw a lot of grrreate stuff. Here's a look.

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My plant chaperones (l to r) Monique Hakkert, Kristan McGuigan and Erica Zipp, as we set off for a review of the vegetative propagation program highlights.

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A wall of pansies. Nice right?



A new line of double flowering Osteospermums, the 3D line. The colors went from muted lavender silver to vivid magenta.



I'm a sucker for osteos especially when they're like this one, Serenity Rose Magic. The color shifts within one plant were great and they hold their color well, besides.



Monique showed me a technique that Ball uses for 'bundling' three seedlings into one plug that they call Trixis. Pretty darn clever and successful.



These two really caught my eye, 'Wasabi' coleus and 'Lucky Lemon Glow' lantana. Especially nice about 'Wasabi' is that it can take full sun and shows better chartreuse color in lots of light.



LOVED this 'Phantom' petunia, nearly black purple color with flares of buttery yellow. The combination was great and mixed nicely with other soft yellows of 'Candle Light' petunia.



The Angelonia Archangel line. Great colors, sturdy and upright habit, nearly non-stop flower. Brava!



Now onto the seed production line with Claire Watson and special guest, Diane Blazek from All-American Selections, equivalent of the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval ratings folks for garden plants. Some really great Dichondra hanging behind them.



Claire was very psyched about a new line of pansies, Plentifalls, trailing pansies perfect for hanging baskets and window boxes. They trail but not the way that pansies normally will start looking, stretched and stressed.



The colors, of course, are great and the habit is really something, just masses of flowers spilling out from the container. I mean, yeah, I love it!



And what's not to like about these sweet alyssum? Coral-peach, pale yellow, purple mixed colored sweet alyssum? Sure.



The classic Sorbet Series of pansies, my 'go to' line when I'm buying pansies.



O.K., I was skeptical when I saw the sign claiming this plant was from one seed, but Claire re-assured me that is the case and I was very impressed.



Swoon... a full bench of perfect perennials in late March on a sunny, cool Southern California morning.



And reaaally nice Aquilegia, so nice. They rival the McKenna hybrid line that I love so much.



There's those 3D Osteospermum again flooding a bench in the main display area.



Chamelaucium, or wax flower and Thryptomene, two Aussie plants that are very happy in California and these are part of Ball's woody collection.



This is Acacia 'Cousin It'. The name is nearly as charming as the plant itself. It's a slow grower and perfect for containers, which is what Ball is working toward with many of their woodies, adapting them as container plants.



A version of the popular California native plant Ceanothus, 'Lemon Ice', with chartreuse green variegation along the leaf margins. SO, just the tip of what I saw and what you ought to look for yourself this coming season. Thanks to everyone at Ball for a the preview!