

Adventure of the Year, III

Written on April 7, 2011 at 8:26 am , by [Justin W. Hancock](#)

Doug and I arose early Wednesday morning eager to get on the road and see more great new plant varieties. Our first stop was in Lompoc — UK plant breeding company [Floranova](#) and its exceptionally cool brand of vegetables, [Vegetalis](#). It was here we got to see such plants as beautifully variegated '[Field of Dreams](#)' corn, adorable '[Whispers](#)' nicotiana, and sweet little [Royale salpiglossis](#).

And one of the coolest thing is that Floranova set up displays in their greenhouse that looked like planting beds (very nice ones at that!) and they a fantastic job of mixing vegetables and herbs right in with their flowering annuals. Floranova even had a movie-set-style house facade in their greenhouse to help show off landscaping ideas with their products.



'Field of Dreams' corn on the ends of this bed with 'Whispers' nicotiana running in a line down the middle. Great plants!



Look at how easy it is to mix veggies with your flowers in a home landscape setting!

After taking in the sights at Floranova, it was time to jump back in the car and we drove 50 miles south to Santa Barbara where, at Imagination Canyon Greenhouses, we were able to meet with three companies in one stop. The first was European plant breeder [GGG](#), a company which I'd love to see more of their plant varieties around the US. One standout product was [Velox Pink](#) — an unusual, mildew-resistant cross between annual phlox and verbena.

Also on board was [Skagit Gardens](#) from the Pacific Northwest. A great company that supplies many fine perennials to retail garden centers across the country, one of its stellar offerings was the [Gold Collection](#) of shade-loving, deer- and rabbit-resistant, drought-tolerant hellebores. [Salvia 'Wendy's Wish'](#) was also a fun one!

Next up was [Florist De Kwakel](#), a Dutch company that almost exclusively breeds gerbera daisies. They have such interesting varieties, including ['Midi Bicolour Double'](#), ['Patio Everglades'](#), and the semi-hardy [Garvinea series](#).

Plus we got to see what's new in the world of plant tags from the [John Henry company](#) and snack on delicious chocolate croissants.



It was back in the car...and another 20 miles later we hit gorgeous [Island View Nursery](#), where we had the opportunity to meet with wonderful folks from three more companies.

The first was [Plant Haven](#), a company that helps bring some of the coolest plant varieties around to the market. You're probably familiar with a lot of the plants they've handled — [Black Scallop ajuga](#), ['Fanfare' gaillardia](#), and new-for-2011 ['Ruby Falls' redbud](#).

But this time they were showing off a ton of outstanding dianthus, including the [Dessert series](#), the [Star series](#), and more. I can't even begin to describe how wonderful it smelled in there!!

In greenhouse right next to Plant Haven, we found [Hort Couture](#) — a group of plants you'll *only* find at finer retail garden centers. They had so many topnotch varieties — some stellar calibrachos, lobelias, petunias, coleus...and the list goes on!!

With them was wonderful European plant breeder [Westhoff](#), known for their lobelias, verbenas, and [calibrachoa](#). How can you not fall in love with a variety like ['Superstar' lobelia](#), double [Roccoco Peach verbena](#), or [Estrella Voodoo Star verbena](#)?

Then it was off to [Ball Horticultural](#), where afterward, all we could say was “wow!” They had a ton of new varieties, including ‘Wasabi’ coleus that really caught Doug’s eye last month when he was at [Costa Farms](#). One of my favorite new varieties for next year is the Archangel line of angelonia (the purple, pink, and white flowers in the first picture below). The blooms are so much bigger than any other angelonia I’ve ever seen!

Not only did we see rock-star plants, but we also had a lovely visit with old friends and make some new ones. Plus, they gave us lunch and it was amazing!



Golden 'Wasabi' coleus...Wow! Especially with purple Archangel angelonia.



Did you see the first two installments? If not, check them out!

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[Day 2](#)

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