

Unusual From The Cut Flower Trials

Today's cut flowers come in many more forms than the standard seed varieties. Learn how to extend your offerings with these perennial and woody cuts.

By John Dole

If the seed varieties (see page 56) offer an astounding array of new varieties, you should see the truly new and different possibilities coming from the perennial and woody breeders/suppliers. These varieties offer cut flower growers genuine opportunities for differentiation.

For the perennial and woody trials, we had nine and 10 volunteer trialers, respectively, of which eight and six trialers, respectively, returned results. In addition, all cultivars are grown and evaluated at North Carolina State University (NC State), Raleigh, N.C., Zone 7. Trialers provide evaluations at the end of the year to NC State. Full details — including comments made by trialers — can be found in *The Cut Flower Quarterly*.

Cut Perennial Trials

Echinacea. This genus that is just beginning to hit its stride. Anyone reading the plant catalogs knows that many interesting hybrids are available and more are coming. We

haven't forgotten the beauty of the original species, however, and 'Ruby Star' (Gro'n Sell) is one of the best representatives. This species has large, bright-purple petals held horizontal from the rich, red center. The durable plants flower the second year after planting. Apparently enough Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers (ASCFG) members thought 'Ruby Star' was among the best because it is the ASCFG Fresh Cut Flower of the Year for 2006.

Eryngium. There is nothing quite like the metallic blue-purple of eryngium 'Blaukappe' (Gro'n Sell). The fact that the thistle-like eryngium has established itself as a specialty cut flower is a testament to how far the cut flower industry has come from the days of only roses, carnations and chrysanthemums. 'Blaukappe' requires good drainage during the winter. Typically, flowers are cut fresh, but they also make long-lasting dried flowers.

Heuchera. Heuchera 'Florist's Choice' and 'Magic Wand' (both from Terra Nova Nurseries) contin-

ue to impress me. These rather unassuming plants were very productive in the second year of trials, producing an average of 15 stems per plant with at least one trialer getting 35 stems per plant with 'Magic Wand'. Both cultivars were easy to grow with few problems. They were not the most impressive cut stems because of their small heads, but the ease of harvest overcomes that problem. The plants produce a dense clump of foliage and 18- to 26-inch flower stems.

Zantedeschia. The well-named zantedeschia (calla lily) 'Edge of Night' (Terra Nova) produced gorgeous, deep maroon-purple flowers. The foliage was even prettier with large leaves covered in white spots and edged in the same maroon as the flowers. Productivity and stem length were a little low, however, with only 1-3 stems per plant and a stem length of only 14-18 inches. Colored callas seem to be special enough that customers want them even if the stems are short — one trialer reported getting \$2 a stem. Always nice to hear!



Top: heuchera 'Florist's Choice'. **Middle:** echinacea 'Ruby Star'. **Bottom:** zantedeschia 'Edge of Night'. (Photos: John Dole)

Perennial Trial Results													
Cultivar	Plants surviving (%)	Yield (stems/plant)	Stem length (inches)	Market appreciation rating*	Repeat again rating*	Ease of cultivation rating*	Cultivar	Plants surviving (%)	Yield (stems/plant)	Stem length (inches)	Market appreciation rating*	Repeat again rating*	Ease of cultivation rating*
Agastache	76.3	18.6	23.4	2.2	2.3	3.8	Heuchera	98.3	15.0	23.7	4.0	4.3	4.7
'Golden Jubilee' (GS)	30-100	13-24	16-36	1-3	2-3	2-5	'Florist's Choice' (TN)	95-100	7-23	20-27	3-5	4-5	4-5
Echinacea purpurea	100.0	14.7	25.3	3.5	3.7	5.0	Heuchera	96.8	14.3	22.4	3.6	4.3	4.5
'Ruby Star' (GS)	100	4-30	20-36	3-5	3-5	5	'Magic Wand' (TN)	87-100	5-35	18-26	2-5	4-5	4-5
Eryngium planum	66.7	5.8	23.8	4.0	3.0	3.5	Lobelia	48.0	9.5	27.2	1.7	2.5	2.5
'Blaukappe' (GS)	0-100	4-8	16-32	3-5	2-4	3-4	'Ruby Slippers' (TN)	0-85	9.5	26-30	1-3	2-3	2-3
Euphorbia	75.0	1.5	13.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	Persicaria	68.0	19.5	20.6	2.3	2.7	4.3
'Chameleon' (GS)	0-100	1.5	13	2	1	2	'Brush Strokes' (TN)	0-100	9-30	15-26	1-4	1-5	3-5
Campanula	49.5	4.8	22.7	2.3	2.3	3.3	Persicaria	41.0	51.3	26.3	2.3	3.0	4.3
'Bernice' (TN)	0-100	3-7	17-27	1-4	1-4	2-4	'Silver Dragon' (TN)	0-100	15-89	19-40	1-4	1-5	3-5
Geum	73.8	9.3	25.0	4.3	4.0	4.7	Zantedeschia	98.8	1.3	16.0	5.0	5.0	4.5
'Fireball' (TN)	0-100	6-15	18-36	3-5	2-5	4-5	'Edge of Night' (TN)	95-100	1-2	14-18	5	5	5

Figure 1. The first row of data for each cultivar is the average, and the second row is the range of responses. Note when only one response is listed in the range line, either only one person responded for that category or several responded and all gave the same rating. Data shown are from those respondents who harvested stems. Some respondents may not have harvested stems because they were too short. Flowering stems may be longer next year after plants are established. *Ratings are based on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the best. Market ratings are based on sales to wholesalers, retailers or final consumers.

variety information

Geum. One of the highest-scoring perennials among the trial plants was 'Fireball' (Terra Nova) with its large, striking orange flowers. This productive plant had more than nine stems

per plant, with some growers getting up to 15 stems per plant. The stems averaged 25 inches. Plants perform best with excellent drainage, especially during the winter.

Cut Woody Trials

We had high hopes for three shrubs that produced great results last year even in their first year: calli-
carpa 'Early Amethyst' (Spring

Meadow Nursery), hydrangea 'Limelight' (Spring Meadow Nursery) and physocarpus 'Diabolo' (Bailey Nursery). We certainly were not disappointed in the second ►

Woody Plant Trial Results

Cultivar	Plants flowering (%)	Plants dead at end of summer (%)	Yield (stems/ plant)	Stem length (inches)	Market appreciation rating*	Repeat again rating*	Ease of cultivation rating*
<i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> 'Brilliant' (BA)	100.0 100	0 0	3.0 3	36.0 36	4.0 4	n/a n/a	5.0 5
<i>Callicarpa dichotoma</i> 'Early Amethyst' (SM)	100.0 100	0 0	46.7 6-109	33.5 23-42	3.5 2-5	3.5 2-5	5.0 5
<i>Cotinus coggygria</i> 'Young Lady' (SM)	50.0 0-100	15.0 30	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
<i>Heptacodium miconioides</i> (SM)	50.0 0-100	15.0 30	12.5 25	24.0 24	4.0 4	4.0 4	4.0 4
<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i> 'Limelight' (SM)	100.0 100	0 0	26.3 7-62	27.8 20-36	4.3 3-5	4.7 4-5	4.7 4-5
<i>Ilex verticillata</i> 'Berry Nice' (SM)	50.0 0-100	0 0	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	3.0 3	4.0 4	3.0 3
<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> 'Diabolo' (BA)	100.0 100	0 0	14.0 2-30	28.7 14-36	3.0 1-5	3.5 2-5	5.0 5

Cultivar	Plants flowering (%)	Plants dead at end of summer (%)	Yield (stems/ plant)	Stem length (inches)	Market appreciation rating*	Repeat again rating*	Ease of cultivation rating*
<i>Prunus mume</i> 'Double Red' (NA)	100.0 100	0 0	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
<i>Prunus mume</i> 'Kobai' (NA)	100.0 100	0 0	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
<i>Sambucus edulis</i> (NA)	66.7 0-100	20 60	3.0 3	26.25 17-36	1.0 1	1.5 1-2	3.0 3
<i>Syringa x hyacinthiflora</i> 'Asessippi' (BA)	50.0 50-100	0 0	2.0 2	16.0 16	4.0 4	4.0 4	3.5 3-4
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i> 'Beauty of Moscow' (BA)	50.0 50-100	0 0	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	4.0 4	3.5 3-4
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i> 'Edith Cavell' (BA)	0 0	0 0	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a	n/a n/a
<i>Viburnum dentatum</i> 'Blue Muffin' (SM)	100.0 100	0 0	10.0 10	16.0 16	4.0 4	3.0 3	4.0 4

Figure 2. The first row of data for each cultivar is the average, and the second row is the range of responses. Note when only one response is listed in the range line, either only one person responded for that category or several responded and all gave the same rating. Data shown are from those respondents who harvested stems. Some respondents may not have harvested stems because they were too short. Flowering stems may be longer next year after plants are established. *Ratings are based on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being the best.

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year. All three cultivars are fast growing and productive plants.

Callicarpa. 'Early Amethyst' produced a multitude of long stems heavily covered in purple berries. Trialers harvested an average of 47 stems per plant and got 23- to 42-inch-long stems. Now, if only we can get a callicarpa that dropped its leaves in early fall or late summer to eliminate time-consuming leaf removal — well, we can dream, can't we?

Hydrangea. 'Limelight' has only gotten better with age — the large, flower heads are produced on stems up to 3 ft. long. Considering that trialers, including NC State, were able to harvest marketable stems from our plants in the first season, the added 26 stems per plant from this year make it an even better choice. The stems are strong and straight, mak-

ing this a better choice than the original species.

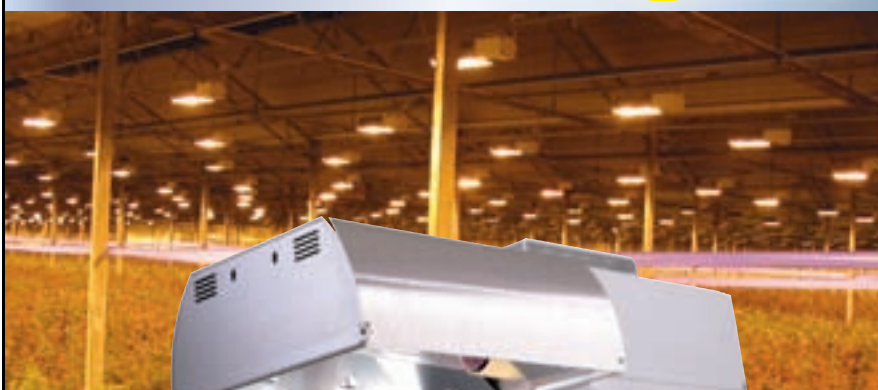
Physocarpus. 'Diabolo' seems to be making more of an impact as cut foliage. The inflorescences are 2- to 3-inch-wide clusters of small, white flowers — attractive but not very distinctive. The bronzy foliage, however, makes great filler for bouquets. Stems averaged 29 inches long, and plants produced anywhere from 2-30 stems per plant. **[GPN]**

John Dole is professor of floriculture at North Carolina State University. He can be reached at john_dole@ncsu.edu.

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