

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

# Dazzling Dahlias



*Adored for their exciting shapes and stunning colors, dahlias continue to be a top seller in the marketplace.*



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**V**ery few flowers engender as much excitement, adoration and interest as dahlias. The public fascination for the myriad flowers forms, sizes and colors is unparalleled. There are thousands of registered seed and vegetative cultivars and over 14 groups classified by flower type.

The introduction of new vegetative varieties and entire series from multiple breeders is unprecedented, and many current and new introductions were entered and displayed in containers and beds in multiple trials throughout the country this summer. I will highlight some of the most colorful and impressive performers.

What differentiated and distinguished these varieties from other dahlias in the trial? First and foremost, my focus was on unique flower colors and forms. Additional attributes included flower stability, heat tolerance, durability, uniformity and flower canopy coverage.

Dahlia spring production programs generally focus on a series, but we must remember that — from the consumer point of view — flower color and form as well as foliage color are the determining factors in retail appeal and sell through.

## **1. 'DAHLEGRIA APRICOT BICOLOR'**

*Syngenta Flowers*

Syngenta introduced two black leaf series for 2020, the compact Happy Days and the vigorous Dahlegria. The Dahlegria varieties, comprised of seven colors, were upright and uniform with excellent flower presentation above the foliage and with solid and bicolor single flowers. The series matures at 10 to 16 inches and has multiple applications in beds and as a thriller in containers. The two most striking varieties in the summer trials were Orange and Apricot Bicolor. The contrasting dark foliage and vibrant, stunning multicolored single flowers were impressive and dramatic. This is a series that will provide an outstanding retail presentation and strong consumer appeal.



## 2. 'VENTI RED + WHITE'

*Selecta One*

The Venti series is new for 2020 and consists of a wide range of solid and bicolored flowers. It was entered in Southern and Northern trials and did not disappoint. The double flowers, vigor, uniformity and, most impressively, flower canopy were consistent and uniform in every region. There are nine colors in the series and they mature at 15 to 18 inches. They should be used in 2.5-quart and larger container programs. My favorite colors were Passion Fruit and Red + White. The bicolor flowers were stunning, and both varieties manifested excellent heat tolerance. Red + White was the winner of the People's Choice award at the University of Georgia trial garden this summer.

## 3. 'XXL CANCUN'

*Dümmen Orange*

The Dümmen Orange dahlia portfolio is extensive with many series to choose from. The vigorous XXL series entered the trial program in 2011, was introduced to the market in the spring of 2012, and has been a ubiquitous dahlia series in the market ever since. The series is comprised of 12 floriferous colors, and they have been stellar performers in summer trials and wholesale and retail programs. The series manifests large flowers, strong peduncles, durability, and, most importantly, a visible flower canopy second to none. This is a garden dahlia with a maturity of 24 to 30 inches and is an all-season performer. Gallon production is recommended, and consumer and landscape application includes mass plantings, borders, containers and cottage gardens. Cancun, the new introduction, was one of the best red dahlias in summer trials. The strong flower canopy and floriferousness were consistent with the series. This new variety is offered exclusively from Mast Young Plants for 2020.

## 4. 'ELECTRO PINK'

*Westhoff/Plant Haven*

This standalone hybrid dahlia was on display at the California Spring Trials this spring as well as the Colorado State University trial this summer, and it caught my eye

because of the dark mahogany-black foliage and the large semi-cactus cerise pink flowers with quill-shaped ray petals that are revolute, giving the flowers a spiky appearance. This is a vigorous, upright variety with a growth habit similar to the Mystic series,

and it is the first introduction of an upcoming series. Three or four additional varieties will be added in 2021-2022. Unrooted cuttings of this variety are only available through Vivero for 2020. Production application includes 6-, 8-, 10- and 12-inch containers.

## 5. 'LUBEGA POWER TROPICAL PUNCH'

*Benary+*

This series was first introduced by Volmary in Europe and was introduced into the American market by Benary+ in 2017-18. It is comprised of 13 solid and



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bicolored double flowers, including five new colors for 2020. I would characterize the series as vigorous and early blooming, with excellent upright branching, short peduncles and a colorful canopy. Two of the new exciting varieties for 2020, Tropical Punch and Violet Bicolor, were in multiple trials and were two of the most floriferous and eye-catching varieties in the Colorado State University trial in late summer because of their flower size, stability and the color saturation. This is a versatile dahlia with application in multiple sizes, especially in patio containers. Unrooted cuttings are available from Benary+, and Plug Connection will offer liners for 2020.

**6. 'STARSISTER YELLOW DAFFODIL'**  
*Dümmen Orange*

Starsister is unquestionably one of the most unique dahlia series in the market. The

anemone and collarette-shaped flowers in 11 colors are stunning and distinctive. Yellow Daffodil is new for 2020, and the luminosity and saturation of the yellow anemone flowers differentiated this variety from any dahlia in the trials. This series is characterized by compactness, maturing at 10 to 12 inches, with flower development above the canopy on the terminals creating a dramatic retail presentation. Production application includes quarts and mixed containers.

**7. 'GRANDALIA SUNRISE'**  
*Syngenta Flowers*

In the Syngenta portfolio, Grandalia is listed as a vigorous series comprised of 14 colors, including three new varieties and two improvements for 2020. The double flowers are produced on short petioles and rise above the foliage to create a colorful display. Sunrise

is not new to the series, but it is one of the most vivacious and salient colors with rose-colored ray florets and a splash of yellow toward the base and darker rose disc florets. The flowers are stunning and attention grabbers. This uniform series matures at 18 to 24 inches and application includes 2-quart and larger containers.

**8. 'LABELLA MAGGIORE ROSE BICOLOR'**  
*Beekenkamp*

Beekenkamp is a Dutch breeder with a large portfolio of vegetative products including four series of Labella dahlia: Piccolo, Medio, Grande and Maggiore. They trial their varieties throughout the globe, including regional trials in the United States. The vigorous Maggiores were introduced at the California Spring Trials in 2017 and entered the market last year. I have observed and evaluated the Maggiore series since its introduction, and it consistently continues to flower and perform late in the season. The dark green foliage is durable with excellent upright architecture. The flowers are large and extend above the foliage to produce a colorful canopy. There are five colors in the series, three solids and two bicolors. The series matures at 24 inches. The Rose Bicolor with creamy white ray flowers and rose tips with a splash of yellow in the center was my favorite in the trials. It is heat tolerant, nonfading and possesses strong stems. It continued to flower through September. Spring production application includes gallons and 8-inch containers. The consumer options include patio containers, beds and cottage gardens.

**9. 'SINCERITY'**  
*Syngenta Flowers*

This standalone dahlia variety generated interest and excitement at the California Spring Trials this year for one significant reason: the magnificent, large, pink and white bicolor flowers with a splash of yellow in the center. There are numerous adjectives to describe this decorative dahlia flower including vivid, luminous and bright. The compact, well-branched plant was consistent and non fading in the trials, and it matured at 20 to 24 inches in beds and containers. This is a variety that will attract intense interest because of flower size and the multicolored double flowers. Application will include patio container and beds.

**10. 'LABELLA GRANDE DARK PINK'**  
*Beekenkamp*

This double variety is not new, but it has been entered in summer trials for many years to demonstrate its uniformity, heat tolerance, flower stability and impressive flower canopy. This series has been a favorite in the Costa Farms trial and has scored highly in the Penn State and Raker-



Roberta's trials. The series consists of nine colors that are excellent in 6-inch programs. The Dark Pink variety had deep pink ray petals and white tips with multiple flower heads, minimal flecking with short petioles and flowers extended consistently above the foliage. The plants mature at 12 inches, and if a bench run uniform series is required this series will achieve that goal.

#### 11. 'MYSTIC SPARKLER'

*Plant Haven*

This article would not be complete without highlighting the Mystic series, which has been in the market for many years. There are nine colors in the series. One of the latest additions is Sparkler with a vibrant multicolored pink and red ray floret with a yellow splash surrounding


the disc. This variety was the most eye-catching color in the series this summer. The attributes of these varieties include long stems positioned well above the dark mahogany foliage, outstanding heat tolerance, mildew resistance, extended blooming window and impressive retail appeal. Application includes patio containers and specifically landscape beds where they provide a colorful background, maturing at 36 inches. The architecture, durability, and uniqueness of this series sets it apart from the plethora of dahlia series in the market.

#### 12. 'DALAYA PURPLE + WHITE'

*Selecta One*

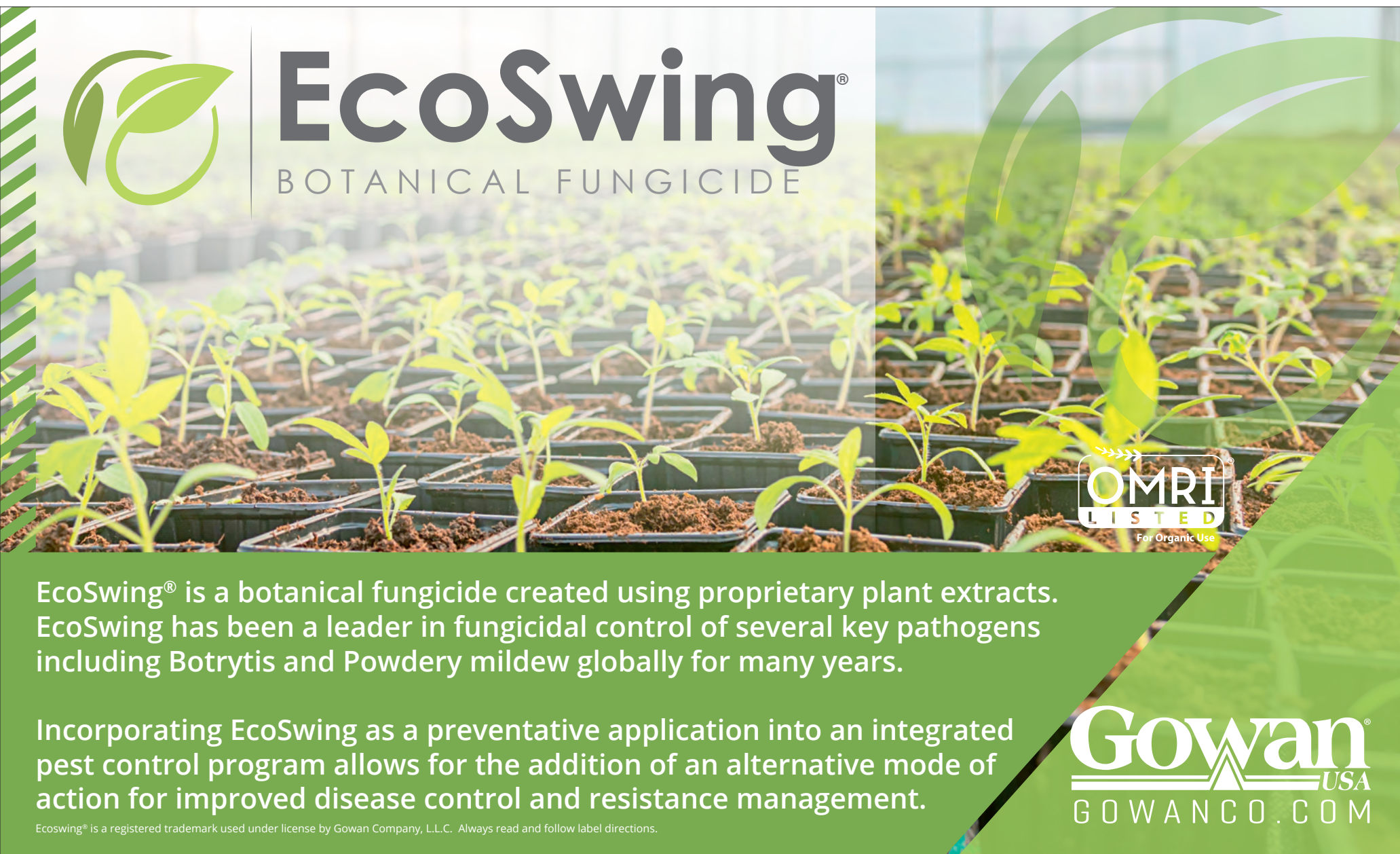
This medium-sized series in the Selecta One dahlia portfolio is comprised of 12 colors including bicolors and solids. The double,


semi double, decorative, and anemone type flowers offer a diverse color palette. This series has been in the industry for a few years and striking new colors have been added every year since its introduction. The series is characterized by excellent upright branching and a floriferous canopy. It matures at 16 to 18 inches. Many colors have been recognized for their uniqueness including Pink + Lemon and Yellow + Red Eye, and four new colors have been added for 2020 including Vampire, White, Dark Red + White, and Purple + White. The Purple + White with deep purple ray flowers tipped with white and a yellow center were impactful and eye catching. This distinctive color pattern was unmatched in competitive series in the summer trials. The breeder recommends 2.5 quart and larger containers. [gpn](#)



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