

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

CAPTIVATING *Perennials*

1

These notable and colorful perennial varieties demonstrated high impact in 2020 summer trials.



Vaughn Fletcher is president of Fletcher Consulting. He has been in the horticulture industry since 1971, working in many areas including landscaping, garden center and greenhouse production, greenhouse and nursery sales and sales management. He can be reached at vfletcher9@gmail.com.

This spring is my 50th year in the horticultural industry. To gain perspective of the significant and extraordinary breeding, trialing, and introduction of new perennial genera and species that have been added to the market since the early 1970s, I perused many of the books and catalogs of that period, including “Perennials” by James Underwood Crocket, Donald Wyman’s “Gardening Encyclopedia,” and “The English Flower Garden” by William Robinson, as well as the Ball, Gloeckner and Vaughan’s seed catalogs from the early ‘70s.

The genetic advancements include day length neutrality, non vernalization requirements, assorted foliage and flower colors, flower duration, production programmability, disease resistance, uniformity, flower stability, and heat tolerance. Perennials not only have application in traditional landscape beds, but are now used in designer recipe combinations and containers. These diverse planting options offer the consumer the opportunity to expand the utilization of perennials in many different settings.

Perennial trialing in university and public sites throughout the United States has expanded significantly in the past 10 years; this has given breeders and the horticultural industry the opportunity to visit trial sites and evaluate the new introductions or to read the multiple trial reports released each fall. I attended the following perennial trials sites last summer: Costa Farms, Colorado State University, Penn State University, Raker-Roberta’s and the Dallas Arboretum.

The marketing term “color sells” is ubiquitous in our industry, and this has become significant in the perennial world as we progress to the annualization of perennials. We have a vast array of perennials available today and the challenge is choosing varieties that provide continuity of color and varieties that bloom harmoniously at different times. I focused primarily on the attributes of flower duration, vigor, uniformity, durability and floriferousness, but other qualities for consideration include leaf shape, texture and structure.



1. COREOPSIS 'SOLANNA SUNSHINE'

Danziger

Solanna is the most complete grandiflora series in the market. It now comprises eight varieties including four new colors: Golden Princess, Sunset Burst, Yellow Touch and Sunshine, which I highlight in this article. This series offers diverse flower forms including singles, doubles, fluted and bicolors. The attributes include earliness, first year-flowering, no vernalization requirement, uniformity and a long bloom cycle. What distinguishes this series on the retail bench is the flower canopy rising above the foliage, the outstanding mounded habit and the assorted flower forms. I was impressed with Sunshine in the trials. It manifested large and bright single yellow flowers maturing at 18 inches. The series is hardy to Zone 4. Unrooted cuttings are available from ThinkPlants, and liners are available from many regional perennial suppliers.

2. VERONICA 'VERNIQUE RASPBERRY'

Green Fuse Botanicals

This veronica series has been outstanding in multiple trials the past few years, and with the introduction of the 'Vernique Raspberry' I thought it was important that I describe and encourage you to consider this series in your future perennial production. There are seven colors in the series, and this veronica is part of the First Light Perennial program. This program combines varieties that are first-year flowering, require no cold treatment, are day length neutral, and are programmable like annuals. The attributes of the series include extended blooming period, extensive color palette, floriferousness, uniformity, and long and colorful flower spikes. The color intensity and vibrancy of the new Raspberry last summer was dramatic. There are seven colors in the series, and Raspberry and White are new introductions for 2021. The series matures at 12 to 18 inches and is hardy to Zone 4.

3. DIANTHUS 'MOUNTAIN FROST RUBY GLITTER'

Darwin Perennials

Darwin continues to add new varieties to the Mountain Frost series and have introduced Ruby Glitter and Ruby Snow for 2021. There are now nine vibrant colors

in the assortment. Ruby Glitter was in multiple trials last summer and offers the most unique color pattern in the series. The large, non-fading red blooms interspersed with white blotches were stunning and prolific, and continued to bloom throughout

the summer. Ruby Glitter also has silvery foliage, which contrasts strikingly with the distinctive flowers. This series has many attributes including uniformity, deep green foliage, a mounded habit, reblooming potential, and no vernalization requirement, and

GENERAL REGISTRATION OPENS
March 9

 **AmericanHort**
Presents **CultivateTM21**
July 10-13, 2021 | Columbus, Ohio USA

The green industry's
must-attend event.

Register for an **All-Access Pass**
and attend any of the 100+
education sessions, including
**50+ programs specifically for
greenhouse growers.**

Invest in education so you and
your business can **Perform Better,
Grower Faster, and Prepare for
the Future.**

Register Today At
AmericanHort.org/Cultivate

*Cultivate
Together*



it is hardy to Zone 4b. Production application includes 2.5 quart and gallons, and consumer and commercial application includes landscape borders.

4. MONARDA 'MARJE PURPLE'

Green Fuse Botanicals

The Monarda Marje series, composed of Pink, Purple and Rose, has been in regional trials the past few years and has demonstrated incomparable mildew resistance, a prodigious flower canopy, and large vibrant asymmetrical tubular flowers. This Bee Balm series matures at 15 to 18 inches, spreads up to 30 inches, manifests a compact habit, and blooms in July and August. This is part of the Green Fuse Botanical Equinox Perennial program. It will require vernalization and long days to produce vibrant flowers and a multiple flower count. We have many outstanding monarda series in the market, and based on performance in regional trials, this series deserves consideration. This photo was taken at the Colorado State University perennial trial in early August. Unrooted cuttings are available from InnovaPlant and Vivero, and liners are available from multiple suppliers.



5. AGASTACHE 'BEELICIOUS PURPLE'

Concept Plants

Every year, I focus on an agastache that manifests an abundance of vibrant flower spikes throughout the season, and this year my choice is 'Beelicious Purple'. This is a standalone variety, and it has the upright habit and flower power to justify consideration in any summer program. The rich and vibrant purple flower spikes were profuse and eye catching. This mint-scented selection attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, is drought tolerant, and matures at 16 inches. Based on performance last summer, this is a very good rebloomer and will have production application in gallons, and application for the consumer in beds and mixed containers.



6. COREOPSIS 'CORLEONE RED+YELLOW'

Benary+

Benary+ continues to add perennials to their vegetative assortment, and this new verticillata variety is a 2020 introduction. We have a wide assortment of coreopsis to choose from, and what impressed me in the trials was the vibrancy of the deep red centers and yellow tipped bright flowers, the stunning bicolor pattern, the well-defined color separation, and the excellent vigor for a verticillata variety. This variety is hardy to Zone 4 and matures at 12 to 15 inches. It will have application in quart and gallon production. Benary Plus has an ongoing breeding program in seed and vegetative perennials in a wide selection of genera, so we should expect to see new coreopsis introductions in the near future.

7. DICENTRA 'PINK DIAMONDS'

Walters Gardens

This Proven Winners Premier Selection for 2020-2021 is distinct from any fern-leaf Bleeding Heart in the market. It is an alpine-type hybrid that prefers a full sun exposure. This variety begins blooming in late spring and will bloom throughout the summer. The two-tone pink flower clusters are positioned above the blue-green foliage, and they are prolific and striking. I was impressed by the clumps of fern-like foliage, the habit and the prolific flowering in mid-August in the Walters Garden trial in Michigan. This is not your typical Bleeding Heart and will become a top seller in the seasons ahead. 'Pink Diamonds' matures at 12 to 16 inches and is hardy to Zone 3.



8. COREOPSIS 'CASTELLO POM POM YELLOW'

Syngenta Flowers

Syngenta has introduced an exemplary Coreopsis grandiflora. This new standalone double-flowering variety demonstrated outstanding characteristics in the summer trials including a uniform habit with sturdy, upright branching. The large double flowers



were positioned above the foliage canopy to create a colorful presentation. This variety will mature at 12 inches and is hardy to Zone 5. We have multiple double grandiflora varieties available in the market, and this new introduction, based on trial performance, will be excellent in production application and in retail displays. This variety is offered by ThinkPlants in unrooted and callus form for 2021.

**9. DELPHINIUM
'DELPHINA DARK BLUE
WHITE BEE'**

Syngenta Flowers

I only saw this series in the Colorado State University trial, but it left a strong impression with its naturally compact habit and fully double flowers on strong short stems. This first year-flowering series is composed of four colors, prefers partial shade, matures

at 18 to 20 inches, and is hardy to Zone 3. The series is recommended for spring and summer programs in 2.5-quart and larger containers, and vernalization is not required. This series, with its uniform and compact habit, will require minimal plant growth regulators and no staking, which will improve ease of production. Multiple perennial liner suppliers offer the entire series in assorted plug and liner sizes.

**10. ECHINACEA
'SOMBRERO FIESTA
ORANGE'**

Darwin Perennials

If you have read my articles the past few years, you understand my passion and focus on distinctive and dramatic colors in annuals and perennials. As I walk through a trial, my eye is always attracted to the flower color before consideration of the



SUBSCRIBE TO LAWN & GARDEN RETAILER FOR FREE!

**L&GR provides information
for retailers on:**

Marketing
Merchandising
Management
Products
Inspiration



**PRINT AND DIGITAL
OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

Subscribe now at
LGRMAG.COM/SUBSCRIBE

Preview the digital edition at
LGRMAG.COM/DIGITAL

other important attributes, which include leaf shape, texture, structure and durability. The colors toward the warmer end of the spectrum are psychologically more dynamic, and this is exemplified by the new 'Sombrero Fiesta Orange' for 2021. Orange is stimulating and vibrant, and this new variety has high visibility and impact. It has single and semi double flowers, is well branched and floriferous, and it matches the series in height and hardiness.

11. ECHINACEA 'SOMBRERO POCO YELLOW'

Darwin Perennials

Darwin has introduced a new Sombrero compact series with the new compact Poco Yellow. In addition, Hot Coral, which is the most compact variety in the Sombrero

series, has been moved to the Poco series due to its habit. Both varieties are well matched and demonstrated excellent flower coverage and non-fading flowers into late August. These varieties can be scheduled like the Sombreros in spring forcing programs, and can be sold in 10 weeks in the Midwest. They mature at 14 to 16 inches and are hardy to Zone 4b. Additional colors are in the pipeline for 2023.

12. ALLIUM 'SERENDIPITY'

Walters Gardens

I visited the Walters Gardens trial in early August and of all the perennials in the display beds, allium 'Serendipity' was the most dramatic and eye catching. This new allium is a sport of allium 'Millenium' and is a Proven Winners Premier Selection for



11



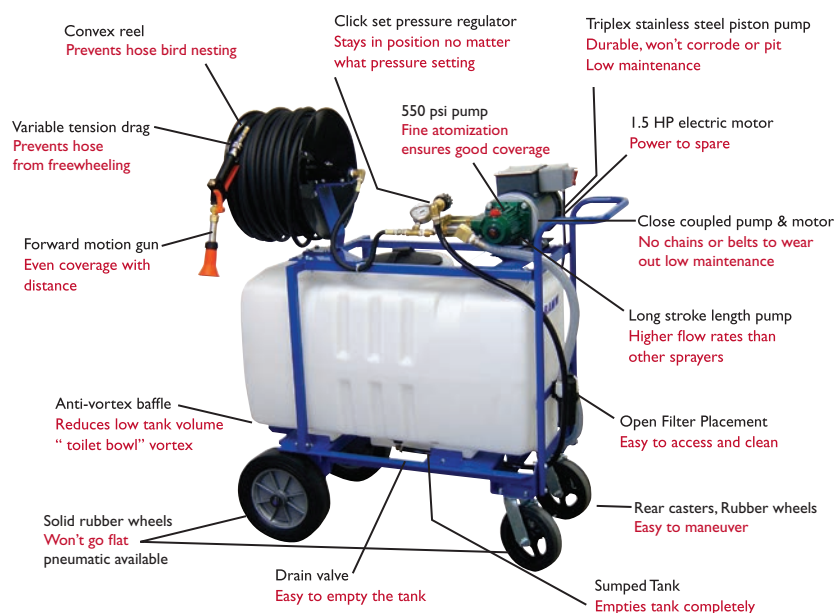
12



13

Hydra Sprayer

Full of Features



Hydra™ 50



Hydra™ ST50



Hydra™ ST100



Hydra™ 200

Building on years of experience, Dramm has perfected the hydraulic sprayer.

Call to learn about the ergonomic & performance enhancements of the Hydra line of sprayers.



Scan to learn more

DRAMM

Integrated Plant Health

information@dramm.com

www.dramm.com

920.684.0227

2021. It offers rosy-purple globe-shaped flowers in abundance above clump-shaped blue foliage, which differentiates it from the glossy deep green foliage of 'Millenium'. This variety matures at 15 to 20 inches and is hardy to Zone 4. I was impressed with its upright architecture, flower structure, and stunning and distinctive flower canopy. This variety is a garden worthy introduction and deserves a place in every perennial garden.

13. ACHILLEA 'FIREFLY SUNSHINE'

Walters Gardens

This Proven Winners achillea collection is distinguished from many achillea series by its upright architecture, sturdiness, durability and persistent color throughout

the summer. The varieties in the collection include Amethyst, Diamond, Peach Sky and Sunshine. Sunshine is the best seller in the collection for good reason — the flower color is vibrant, and the plants have a prodigious flower canopy. The plants mature at 28 to 30 inches and create a thriller in mixed borders. We have many choices when it comes to achillea, and if you are looking for a series that flowers continually and provides size in the garden with a non-fading inflorescence, this is a series for consideration. The varieties are hardy to Zone 3, and each variety in the collection matures at a different height, but they all offer the durability and sturdiness that define the collection. [gpn](#)