

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

PART 2 CAPTIVATING *Perennials*

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This second round of notable and colorful perennial varieties demonstrated high impact in 2020 plant trials.



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This article is part 2 of my evaluation of current and new perennials in the 2020 summer trials that demonstrated exceptional flower power and were distinctive and eye catching. Many of the varieties are currently in the market and many of the new introductions are in production programs this year. The attributes these outstanding perennials manifested in multiple trials include flower stability, durability, floriferousness, heat tolerance and uniqueness.

1. GAILLARDIA 'LUNAR BLOOD MOON'

GreenFuse Botanicals

The gaillardia Lunar series is in the GreenFuse Botanicals First Light perennials program, which is characterized by day length neutrality, no vernalization requirement and no cold treatment. There are six varieties in the vegetative series: Eclipse, Harvest Moon, Honey Moon, Orange Moon, Red Moon and Blood Moon, which is a new variety for 2021 and 2022. This variety last summer manifested the most saturated and brightest red ray flowers I have seen in any gaillardia series. Red Moon is a strong red in the series, but Blood Moon may have better color retention. This series has numerous attributes including a well rounded and uniform habit, strong resistance to splitting, tight internodes, flower stability and a long blooming cycle.

2. DELPHINIUM 'DELGENIUS SHELBY'

Bart Noordius

I saw some notable delphiniums in the 2020 summer trials, including the new Delgenius series, which will be offered exclusively by Pacific Plug & Liner for 2021 as a TC 72 liner. I was impressed by the strong stems, dark foliage, vigor, bushy habit, large double flowers, multi blooms and secondary flower development. There are three varieties in the series: Breezin (purple), Shelby (lilac) and Juliette (pink), and they all demonstrated exceptional flower structure and color. This series is hardy to Zone 3, and one liner is recommended for



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1.5- and 3-gallon production. No vernalization is needed, plants will mature at 18 to 24 inches, and the finish time is 10 to 16 weeks. An April-May planting is recommended by Pacific Plug and Liner with a summer finish. Technical information is also available on request.

3. SALVIA 'BLUE BY YOU'

Darwin Perennials

This interspecific salvia, introduced in 2019, was extensively trialed throughout the country during the past two years and has demonstrated outstanding heat tolerance, prolific flowering and consistent reblooming throughout the summer. 'Blue By You' begins flowering in early summer and continues blooming through September. It was flowering at the Colorado State trial in late July and in mid-September, at the Raker-Roberta's trial in early August, and at the Texas A&M container trial in early October.

It is a hybrid cross of nemorosa and pratensis, and it has durability, winter hardiness and improved programmability. This is a sterile hybrid with deep violet blue flowers that are persistent and prolific with excellent uniformity, compactness and a clump form habit. This standalone salvia matures at 18 to 24 inches and is hardy to Zone 4b. Darwin considers this a 'May Night' improvement and, based on performance the past two years, it appears to be superior in habit, heat tolerance, flowering and reblooming.

4. EUPHORBIA 'MINER'S MERLOT'

Pacific Plug & Liner

We are all familiar with euphorbia 'Ascot Rainbow', which has been in the market for well over 10 years, continues to be offered by numerous perennial liner suppliers, and is widely used in spring programs. We now have another euphorbia for consideration based on its attributes and performance — 'Miner's Merlot'. I only saw this in the Colorado State University trial last summer in July and September, but it was distinctive

with multicolored wine and red foliage and a striking vigorous mounded habit that sets it apart from other dark-leaf varieties. Many of the features of this euphorbia are: persistent lime-green flowers, heat and humidity tolerance, red stems, enduring red foliage and foliage



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density. It is hardy to Zone 6, matures at 18 to 24 inches, and has multiple applications in mixed containers and landscape beds. It is exclusive to Pacific Plug and Liner, and liners are available for 2021 and beyond.

5. LEUCANTHEMUM 'SWEET DAISY REBECCA'

Dümmen Orange

The Sweet Daisy collection of seven leucanthemum varieties offers a wide assortment of flower forms including singles, doubles, fluted and recurved. Birdy was introduced last year and is an All-America Selections winner. Dümmen Orange, not resting on their breeding laurels, has introduced Rebecca for 2021. This double-fringed flowering variety is comparable to the rest of the series in features and benefits. It is day length neutral, uniform, first-year flowering, programmable, has no vernalization requirement, and flowers in 14 weeks from an unrooted cutting. The collection has been well represented in summer trials the last few years, and the performance evaluations have been excellent. Rebecca was in multiple trials last summer and manifested extended flowering from late spring in the South to mid-September in the northern trials. The flowering duration, habit and durability set it apart from many other leucanthemums in the summer trials.

6. ECHINACEA 'ARTISAN SOFT ORANGE'

PanAmerican Seed

There has been extensive coverage regarding this new F1 echinacea collection from seed, and the accolades are justifiable. This collection is composed of Red Ombre and Soft Orange. Both varieties were ubiquitous in last year's summer trials and performed consistently from late spring in the southern trials to early September in the northern trials. The collection manifested uniform flowering, heavily branched architecture and excellent flower size. The flowers transitioned during the season, opening with deep red and orange flowers that transitioned to softer colors by late summer. The varieties are hardy to Zone 4 and mature at 16 to 24 inches. This

is a first-year flowering series and programmable in spring and summer production programs.

7. SALVIA 'COLOR SPIRES BACK TO THE FUCHSIA'

Walters Gardens

There are now five varieties in the collection including the new Back to the Fuchsia for 2021. This variety is a Proven Winners Premier Selection and was trialed throughout the country last year. This is the darkest pink variety in the collection and bloomed continually in trials from early summer through September last year. The fuchsia-pink flowers on long flower spikes were profuse and were positioned above the foliage on strong, charcoal-colored stems. This collection is a cross between nemorosa and pratensis and demonstrated outstanding heat tolerance, basal branching, a mounded habit, and foliage that is rugose and aromatic. This series is impactful in a retail setting with exceptional uniformity and prolific, eye-catching flowers. The series matures at 20 to 24 inches and is hardy to Zone 3.

8. EUPATORIUM 'EUPHORIA RUBY'

Darwin Perennials

We are all familiar with eupatorium 'Baby Joe', which continues to be a worthy variety for summer gardens. The new 'Euphoria Ruby', however, offers many advantages over 'Baby Joe' and other eupatoriums currently in the market. This variety was conspicuous in the Penn State perennial trial. It is one of the first compact and also one of the earliest flowering eupatoriums for the market and has application in both containers and perennial beds. Ruby will begin flowering in mid-July and flower through fall. It is first-year flowering, requiring no PGRs under high light conditions, and can be produced in 2.5 and gallon containers. It will mature at 24 to 30 inches in the garden and is hardy to Zone 5a. This new introduction is Florensis breeding but is represented by Darwin Plants in the North American market. It is available in unrooted form from



Darwin and numerous perennial liner suppliers.

9. ECHINACEA 'KISMET WHITE'

Terra Nova Nurseries

This echinacea variety needs no introduction to the industry. It won numerous awards last year including the Plant of Distinction

award at the University of Georgia trial, and it was one of the most colorful echinaceas in multiple trials that I visited. There are five colors in the series, and since their introduction in 2017 many of the varieties have won top performer recognition throughout the country. I highlighted the exceptional performance of



'Kismet Raspberry' in a perennial article two years ago, and I am now focusing on 'Kismet White' from last year because of its dynamic flowering in multiple trials. Terra Nova has been breeding, developing, marketing, and trialing echinacea for over 25 years and the yearly introductions get better and better. The

attributes of the Kismet series are numerous and include a mounded and uniform habit, vigor, long flowering cycle, flower stability, diverse flower forms, large flowers, and, most importantly, a profuse flower canopy. This is unquestionably one of the finest echinacea series in the market and, based on summer

performance in multiple trials, deserves consideration in spring and summer production programs.

10. DIANTHUS 'CONSTANT PROMISE RED'

GreenFuse Botanicals

This series includes White, Raspberry, Strawberry and the new Red for 2021. I highlighted Strawberry in my April 2019 article for its vibrant color, vigor, large double flowers, flower presentation, and impressive heat tolerance. The Red replicated that performance in the late spring and early summer trials last year. This series is in the GreenFuse Botanicals First Light Perennials program and has day length neutrality, no vernalization requirement and flowers early in the season. Additional features of this series include fragrance, silver foliage and uniformity. 'Constant Promise Red' was in flower throughout the late spring and summer, and the reblooming power was impressive. This is a Zone 4 series that matures at 12 to 16 inches and has production application in quarts and gallons.

11. AGASTACHE 'POQUITO BUTTER YELLOW'

Terra Nova Nurseries

The Terra Nova agastache program continues to set the standard for excellence in breeding and the introduction of stand alone varieties and series that provide diversity in the market. I have focused on the Terra Nova standalone varieties, Morello and Blue Boa, in previous articles and for 2020 I have highlighted the new 'Poquito Butter Yellow'. The Poquito series is considered one of the most compact in the market; offers Zone 5 hardiness; has a bushy habit; and has large, fragrant, prolific flowers. 'Poquito Butter Yellow' was floriferous and colorful in the southern trials in March and continued to manifest durability and season long color in the Northern trials in mid-September. There are now four colors in the series: Lavender, Orange, Dark Blue and Butter Yellow. Many breeding companies have introduced new and exceptional agastache series the past few years, and this expands the grower options and provides the

consumer with a wide assortment that are heat and drought tolerant and pollinator magnets.

12. ORIGATUM 'DROPS OF JUPITER'

Walters Gardens

I have never highlighted an ornamental herb, but this new oregano for 2021 was in the Walters Gardens trial when I visited in mid August and it was absolutely stunning with resplendent chartreuse yellow leaves and a multitude of mauve pink flowers with purple calyxes. The calyxes were persistent even after the flowers were spent on the trial variety. Flowering begins in mid summer and continues through fall. This plant is meant to be appreciated and enjoyed for its texture, foliage color and prolific flowers. Additional attributes include drought tolerance, fragrant foliage, and deer resistance, and it is a bee and butterfly magnet. I understand the foliage is edible, but its main application will be in beds and containers in a full sun exposure. This plant will mature at 24 inches and is hardy to Zone 4. It is a Proven Winners Premier Selection, exclusive to Walters Gardens, and requires a Proven Winners label and container.

13. PHLOX 'SUPER KA-POW FUCHSIA'

Darwin Perennials

The Super Ka-Pow phlox series is new for 2021 and offers more vigor than the standard Ka-Pows. It consists of four colors: Lavender, Pink, White and Fuchsia. This was the most floriferous phlox series in the Raker-Roberta and Ball trials when I visited in mid-August last year. The varieties, especially Fuchsia, manifested outstanding branching, robust growth, a long bloom period, minimal flower fading, powdery mildew resistance and vibrant colors. In addition, Fuchsia was a top performer in the University of Georgia trial with exceptional humidity tolerance. The Super Ka-Pows begin blooming in June and will continue to flower through August. This series is hardy to Zone 4 and matures at 18 to 24 inches. [gpn](#)