

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

Vivid & Vibrant Perennials

These new perennial introductions demonstrated prolific and enduring flowering in the Costa Farms trial garden in Florida.

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The Costa Farms perennial trial in Miami, Florida, consisted of 140 seed and vegetative varieties submitted by 11 international and domestic perennial breeders. The liners were planted weeks 49 and 50, and I visited the trial week 7 and week 15. Obviously, this is not a hardiness trial, but the focus of the evaluation was vigor, durability, heat tolerance, habit, flower color and floriferousness.

The perennial varieties I selected to highlight were flowering on both visits and manifested resilience and a prolonged flowering cycle following more than three months of heat, humidity, and frequent rains. Many of these perennials had additional exposure in perennial trial sites throughout the country this summer.

1. DELOSPERMA 'OCEAN SUNSET ORANGE GLOW'

Darwin Perennials

We have seen significant breeding advances in delosperma (Ice Plant) the past 15 years with the introduction of multiple series with a rainbow of colors and sizes. When I sold delosperma in the 1970s there were two varieties available in the market, nubigenum Hardy Yellow and Cooperi, which are still sold today. What traits are we looking for in

delosperma that will differentiate it from the current selections? The features many of the series share are vibrant colors, drought and heat tolerance, and hardiness. What set the 'Ocean Sunset Orange Glow' and 'Ocean Sunset Orange Vibe' apart from the crowd were the large flowers, high flower count and the vigor. These two varieties manifested the largest flowers I have seen in delosperma. The third new Ocean Sunset variety, Violet, was not in the trial but will be available as part of the series.

The varieties are hardy to Zone 5a and mature at 4 to 6 inches with a spread of 12 to 15 inches. This series is available from Darwin in unrooted form and from multiple liner suppliers.

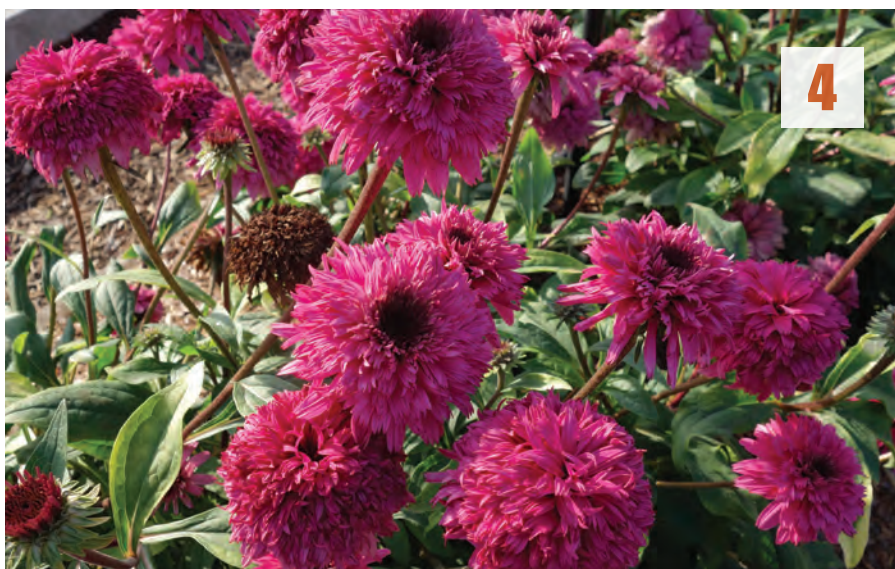
2. AGASTACHE 'SUNNY SPARKS PINK IMPROVED'

Danziger

Danziger introduced the Sunny Sparks series in 2020 with four varieties and expanded the series in 2021 with two new colors, Orange Glow and Pink Glow,



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which were entered in multiple trials last year. 'Sunny Sparks Pink Improved' was entered in the trial this spring and demonstrated the attributes of the series, which are first-year flowering, upright and durable habit, long bicolor flower spikes, and prolific flowering. The series received high performance ratings in multiple trial sites in 2020. The plants mature at 20 inches, are hardy to Zone 5, and require no vernalization or bulking. There are now six colors in the series for 2022. We have many excellent standalone cultivars and series in the industry, and Danziger has introduced an exceptional series for bench run production with uniform timing and height.

3. BUDDLEIA 'CHRYSLIS CRANBERRY'

Darwin Perennials

Darwin offers many buddleia series and varieties in their assortment with upright and trailing forms, and they have introduced the new Chrysalis series — comprised four colors — for 2022. The colors are Cranberry (my favorite color in the trial), Blue, Pink and White. The series is characterized by a long bloom period, a mounded habit, prolific flowering, uniformity and large flower size. These attributes were demonstrated in the trial bed and, with a mature

size of 20 to 28 inches, this series will offer production versatility in assorted container sizes and application for the consumer in large patio containers and landscape sites. The series is hardy to Zone 5a and will bloom consistently throughout the summer. Buddleia is a very popular perennial in the market and offers the consumer a heat- and drought-tolerant colorful perennial with summer performance and the added benefit of attracting butterflies. We have a plethora of outstanding buddleia in the market, and Darwin has introduced a series worthy of consideration in your production program.

4. ECHINACEA 'LOVELY LOLLY'

Pioneer Gardens

This echinacea was a standout in the perennial trial. The large pom-pom, rose-pink, double flowers with dark centers were eye-catching in the trial bed. The flower color is unique to the double echinaceas in the market. 'Lovely Lolly' has multiple buds per stem with excellent caliper, vigor, and a prodigious flower count. I was impressed with the consistency and color stability of the juvenile and mature flowers. It matures at 20 to 24 inches and flowers in the northern regions June through October. This

variety is distributed through the Garden Choice network partners, a select group of growers that offer a wide range of annuals and perennials and are represented by multiple brokers. The Garden Choice organization is active in the trial program and continues to expand their entry of new and exciting annual and perennial varieties. We should look forward to innovative and exciting new introductions represented by their assorted breeders.

5. DIANTHUS 'PEMAN FANCY CERISE'

Dümmen Orange

We have hundreds of dianthus varieties in the market offering production versatility and assorted sizes, flower types, hardiness and habit. Dümmen Orange has a diverse portfolio of dianthus, consisting of the Beauties, Odessa, Sunflor and Olivia series. So what does this new Peman series offer the grower and consumer, and what sets it apart from the crowd?

Based on this early trial, it has many attributes to recommend it including semi-double flowers, compactness, uniformity, consistency throughout the series and prolific flowering, which was demonstrated in the trial bed in both my February and April visits. The floriferousness



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and uniformity are significant features and selling points in the Dümme Orange marketing program, and the series did not disappoint in the Costa trial. The series is hardy to Zone 4 and matures at 12 to 15 inches.

6. **IBERIS 'MERMAID LAVENDER'**

Syngenta Flowers

We have a multitude of outstanding white flowering vegetative iberis in the industry, but this new 'Mermaid Lavender' for 2022 is the most vivacious and significant color introduction I have seen in many years of trialing new iberis introductions. The plants flowered prolifically in the trial bed in February and later in April. This is revolutionary interspecific breeding, which offers a new class with stable lavender flowers, upright habit and prolific flowering. It is a season extender with outstanding heat tolerance. Recommend production application is 1 and 1.5 gallons, and vernalization is beneficial but not required. 'Mermaid Lavender' is hardy to Zone 5 and matures at 15 to 18 inches.

7. **LAVANDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA 'LA DIVA VINTAGE VIOLET'**

Dümme Orange

The introduction of *Lavandula angustifolia* varieties has been impressive the past few years, and the pursuit of hardiness, programmability, consistent flower timing, heat tolerance and prolific flowering is an ongoing goal for many perennial breeders. Even though the aromatic

and medicinal qualities are important, there is no question that the consumer is also attracted to lavender varieties that flower profusely with magnificent flowers. To meet that challenge, Dümme Orange introduced the La Diva program for 2022 — consisting of *dentata*, *stoechas* and *angustifolia* varieties. This will provide the grower with varieties that bloom from early spring through summer. The entire portfolio was in the trial beds and flowering profusely in mid-April. The most floriferous variety was *angustifolia* Vintage Violet with a strong upright habit. The series matures at 8 to 10 inches and is hardy to Zone 4.

8. **LEUCANTHEMUM 'WHITE LION'**

PanAmerican Seed

The introduction of the Fleuroselect and Gold Medal winner F1 Shasta daisy 'Madonna' for 2021 was a significant breeding advancement — a new seed variety that requires no vernalization, demonstrates vigor, has a critical day length requirement of 14.5 hours, and is programmable for late spring and summer sales. PanAmerican Seed has expanded the flowering window with 'White Lion', a new spring Shasta daisy for 2022. This now provides growers with two varieties that will provide prolific flowering from early spring through summer. 'White Lion' will require only 10 hours of critical day length to flower. It has the traditional *leucanthemum* flower structure with an upright and mounded growth habit and matures at 8 to 10 inches. In the

Costa trial in late February and later in mid-April it continued to flower profusely with strong peduncles and upward facing flowers. This new variety has many important qualities including no vernalization requirement, first year flowering, day length neutrality, uniformity and easy programmability. It is a significant alternative to vegetative varieties and is hardy to Zone 3.

9. **GAILLARDIA 'SPINTOP MARIACHI COPPER SUN IMPROVED'**

Dümme Orange

This vegetative *gaillardia* series offers one of the most unique multicolored varieties in the market. Mariachi Copper Sun, with its coppery red fluted petals with yellow tips, was a colorful standout in the trial bed and flowered prolifically. This improved variety matches the SpinTop series in habit and timing and will be an audacious and distinctive *gaillardia* in a retail setting. There are now five varieties in the series exemplified by earliness, extended flowering cycle, mounded habit, and excellent heat tolerance. This series is hardy to Zone 3 and matures at 8-12 inches.

10. **SALVIA 'DARK MATTER'**

Danziger

Danziger currently offers the Apex and the Sallyrosa series in its perennial program, and for 2022 has introduced *Salvia nemorosa* 'Dark Matter' — a standalone variety. This is a first-year flowering, early-blooming variety with



outstanding radial branching similar to the Sallyrosa series. What sets this variety apart from the salvia crowd may be the deep blue flowers that were vibrant and striking in the Costa trial. 'Dark Matter' has reblooming potential, uniformity, matures at 15 to 18 inches, and is hardy to Zone 5. This variety will make an excellent addition to the current nemorosa varieties in the market.

11. *NEPETA SUBSEISSILIS* 'PURPLE PRELUDE'

Darwin Perennials

Nepeta 'Prelude Blue' was introduced for 2021 and was outstanding in regional trials throughout the country. Darwin has added 'Purple Prelude' for 2022. This new variety has many significant characteristics including scented foliage, first-year flowering, mounded habit, dense foliage, vigor, and large, showy racemes with non fading bell-shaped flowers. It manifested

bright purple corollas well above the foliage. Both varieties mature at 30 to 36 inches and are hardy to Zone 4. 'Prelude Blue' bloomed from early June through early October at the Chicago Botanical Garden last summer and required no deadheading. 'Prelude Blue' also was honored with a retailer award at the Farwest Show last year. We have many choices when it comes to this genus, but the Preludes, with their colorful and persistent flowers and large inflorescences, will have excellent retail appeal and provide robustness in a landscape setting.

12. *VERBENA* 'HOMESTEAD HOT PINK'

Darwin Perennials

What do you think of when you read or hear the name verbena 'Homestead Purple'? This is a variety synonymous with toughness, durability and resilience. We have utilized this variety for many years in rock



13. *RUDBECKIA HIRTA* 'DAKOTA GOLD'

Green Fuse Botanicals

The GreenFuse Botanical First Light perennial program has introduced to the market a varied portfolio of exceptional and unique perennial varieties including agastache, buddleia, dianthus, hydrangea, lavender, lupine, leucanthemum and for 2021 rudbeckia 'Dakota Gold'. This is a revolutionary breeding introduction following 10 years of research, development and testing. This variety is hardy to Zone 5, has jumbo 5-7 inch flowers, is first year flowering, requires no vernalization, is day length neutral, matures at 15 to 18 inches, and blooms throughout the summer. It was blooming profusely in late February and mid April in the Costa trial. In the Penn State container trial in 2020, it was an excellent performer and received a high rating. I visited the Penn State trial in late August, and 'Dakota Gold' was flowering prolifically with a strong upright habit and large flowers. Rudbeckia 'Dakota Red Shield' was introduced last year and, with the addition of 'Dakota Gold', the series offers two unique and game-changing varieties for perennial production. [gpn](#)

gardens, landscapes, borders, and as a spiller in container gardening. It is an award-winning variety in southern and northern trials for good reason: it performs!

Darwin Perennials has introduced verbena 'Homestead Hot Pink' for 2022, which was the top performing verbena in the Costa trial throughout the spring season. It manifested vigor, dark green foliage and prolific flower coverage. This variety has received many years of trialing and exhibits the same attributes as the original 'Homestead Purple' — which are low maintenance, heat and humidity tolerance, mildew resistance, and adaptability in dry soil. This vibrant introduction will have outstanding application as a spiller in large patio containers and landscape beds. This variety has a procumbens growth habit with a profusion of vibrant, hot pink flower clusters and is hardy to Zone 6. It is deer resistant and will attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

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