

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

# COLORFUL, EXCITING & DISTINCTIVE Perennials

PART 2

1

*Perennial breeders continue to develop new introductions with outstanding characteristics and attributes. This is Part 2 of Vaughn's 2021 Summer Trials Report on perennials.*



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The breeding, trialing, selection and introduction of new perennials continues relentlessly with a focus on ease of production, heat tolerance, unique colors, disease resistance, durability, extended flowering period, and floriferousness.

Last month, I focused on current and new perennials in the 2021 summer trials. This month, I highlight additional perennial varieties that were stellar performers in the trials and will be rewarding and garden worthy additions for the consumer. As I stated in my March article, I chose perennial varieties in the southern and northern trials that were eye-catching and demonstrated heat tolerance, durability and were distinguishable by their uniformity, flower color, and — most importantly — a prodigious flower canopy.

## 1. RUDBECKIA 'GLITTERS LIKE GOLD'

*Intrinsic Perennial Gardens*

This hybrid rudbeckia needs no introduction to the industry. A stellar performer since its launch, it is an improved selection of Goldsturm. It is one of the most prolific flowering rudbeckias with three-inch-wide golden yellow daisy flowers and thin bladed foliage with a pubescent texture. This variety is resistant to Septoria leaf spot, a wonderful pollinator magnet, and has an upright habit and low maintenance.

What is most impressive is the abundance of flowers and the flower presentation. This variety is hardy to Zone 3, matures at 24 to 36 inches and has multiple applications in mass plantings, landscape beds, and containers. This Black Eyed Susan offers the consumer an herbaceous perennial that will keep on giving year after year. The accompanying photograph is from the Metrolina trial in mid August.

## 2. DELPHINIUM 'DELEGENIUS BREEZIN'

*Bart Noordius*

I highlighted this series following my visit to the Costa trial in April 2020. I was enamored with the long racemes, large florets



2



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and assorted unique colors. The series was entered in trial sites throughout the country in 2020-21, was in spring production programs last year, and based on its attributes will be in many spring perennial programs. The series has received rave reviews throughout the industry for good reason. The attributes include first-year flowering, vigor, strong stems, a dense habit, multiple flower racemes with large individual florets, secondary flower development, irresistible eye-catching flower colors and exceptional heat tolerance. The series in the Metrolina trial in mid-August last year and the Colorado State Trial in mid-September was blooming prolifically.

Breezin was one of my favorites from the Colorado State trial, with its audacious iridescent polychromatic petals of violet, lilac and purple tones, as shown in the accompanying photo. There are four varieties for 2022, including Breezin', Shelby, Juliette and the new Glitz, which received recognition in the CSU first-year trial for superior flowering and reblooming performance. The series is listed as Zone 3 hardiness and matures at 18 to 24 inches.

### 3. PHLOX PANICULATA 'SUPER KA-POW PINK'

*Darwin Perennials*

We have a myriad of outstanding *Phlox paniculata* and *hybrida* varieties and series available from multiple perennial breeders. The Super Ka-Pow series, introduced in 2021, was entered in southern and northern trials last summer and did not disappoint in performance. This is a first-year flowering series comprised of six varieties, including Blue and Coral for spring 2022.

What is impressive about this series is the vigor, excellent branching, prolific terminal flower clusters with super-sized florets, and mildew resistance. The colors are vibrant and non-fading, with a long blooming season from June through September. The accompanying photograph is from the Metrolina trial in mid-August and is representative of what I saw throughout the country last summer and fall.

### 4. MONARDA 'ELECTRIC NEON CORAL'

*Walters Gardens*

The demand for pollinator plant magnets continues unabated, and breeders have stepped up with a wide range of Bee Balm varieties and series with diverse flower colors and forms and increased disease resistance. Walters Gardens offers the Leading Lady, Pardon My, Buzz, and Electric series. Monarda varieties



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were well represented in the summer trials last year and Electric New Coral in the Metrolina trial in mid August was particularly exceptional.

What set it apart in the trial was the upright habit, dark foliage, prolific flower canopy, and the large 3-inch vibrant light coral flowers. There are three varieties in the series: Neon Coral, Neon Pink and Neon Purple. The mature height is 14 to 16 inches and it is hardy to Zone 4. This is another outstanding series for mid summer/late summer flowering.

### 5. PEROVSKIA 'SAGE ADVICE'

*Walters Gardens*

Walters Gardens offers five unique perovskia varieties for 2022, including two Proven Winner selections, 'Denim 'n Lace' and 'Sage Advice', the latter of which was entered in multiple trials last summer. This variety may offer the darkest purple flower shades of perovskia in the market. What was exceptional throughout the country was the uniformity, consistency, uptight architecture, and prolific flowering.

This variety is similar to 'Denim 'n Lace' in flower timing but was slightly taller in the trials. It will reach 36 inches in the garden and is hardy to Zone 4. This Proven Winners selection requires a Proven Winners label and container. The accompanying photograph is from the Colorado State trial in mid-September last year.

### 6. HELENIUM AUTUMNALE 'HAYDAY YELLOW'

*Syngenta Flowers*

This is a genera that perennial breeders have begun to focus on for many reasons, including summer to fall flowering, vibrant flowers, disease resistance, and heat tolerance. The HayDay series was well represented in the summer trials last year, and when I visited in late summer and early fall many of the varieties were at the zenith of their flowering period. This series is composed of five varieties with solid and bicolor flowers. The flower colors are vibrant, and the habit is upright, mounded and compact with dense branching and flowers positioned above the foliage, creating a canopy of color. This will be an excellent series for container production, providing the

grower with a uniform and compact helenium with a nice range of colors.

'HayDay Golden Bicolor' has been awarded the Fleuroselect Gold medal for 2023 for its overall beauty and garden performance. I chose to highlight 'HayDay Yellow' from the Colorado State University trial with its stable, vibrant and bright single flowers. This series is hardy to Zone 5, first year flowering, matures at 15 to 18 inches, and provides the consumer with another viable option for summer and fall flowering in containers and landscape beds.

### 7. LAVANDULA 'LA DIVA VINTAGE VIOLET'

*Dümmen Orange*

La Diva is the new brand name that encompasses the entire Dümmen Orange lavender portfolio. This broad range of lavenders includes Imperial, Eternal Elegance, Big Night, the Papillon series and assorted stand-alone stoechas, angustifolia and Spanish/English crosses. Many of the La Diva introductions were in last year's summer trials, and I focused my attention on the angustifolia varieties that displayed increased heat tolerance, enduring flowers and overall summer performance.

One of the stellar lavender varieties in the trial was 'La Diva Vintage Violet'. It received excellent trial evaluations from Penn State and Colorado State University. What distinguishes this variety from many lavenders is its vigor. It is a supersized version of Eternal Elegance, and with this size comes a prolific flower canopy, stable inflorescences, continual flowering and excellent heat tolerance. This variety is hardy to Zone 5, first-year flowering, and may be the harbinger to more heat and drought tolerant varieties in this class.

### 8. PHLOX PANICULATA 'LUMINARY ULTRA VIOLET'

*Walters Gardens*

Walters Gardens offers an impressive portfolio of phlox collections, including the Luminary series consisting of three varieties: Backlight (new for 2022), Opalescence and Ultraviolet. This is the tallest and most mildew resistant paniculata in the portfolio. I have Opalescence in my perennial garden,



and I am impressed by the vibrant, bright, stable, and prolific flower panicles positioned above the foliage canopy.

'Luminary Ultra Violet' matches Opaescence in its attributes and performance and was eye catching in the trials last summer. What is unique about this variety is the robust upright habit and the rich, highly saturated magenta violet panicles. This variety is an improved Nicky with outstanding color intensity, disease resistance, and floriferousness. The accompanying photograph is from the Colorado State trial in mid-September. This is in the Proven Winners perennial program, matures at 32 to 36 inches, and is hardy to Zone 3.

## 9. DENDRANTHEMA 'FIREDANCE IGLOO'

*Must Have Perennials*

This hardy chrysanthemum series originated with a single plant discovery in 2012. Since that time, more than 17 varieties have been introduced and are available from Aris/Greenleaf and multiple liner suppliers. The objective of the breeding program was to create a new garden-type dendranthema that would provide the consumer with a late summer/



early autumn perennial with hardiness, garden performance, striking flowers, and outstanding flower power.

I have observed this series in trials and botanical gardens the past few years and

have been impressed with the uniformity, mounded habit, floriferousness, durability, and wide variety of colors. The accompanying photograph is from the Penn State University trial last year. This was the third year in the

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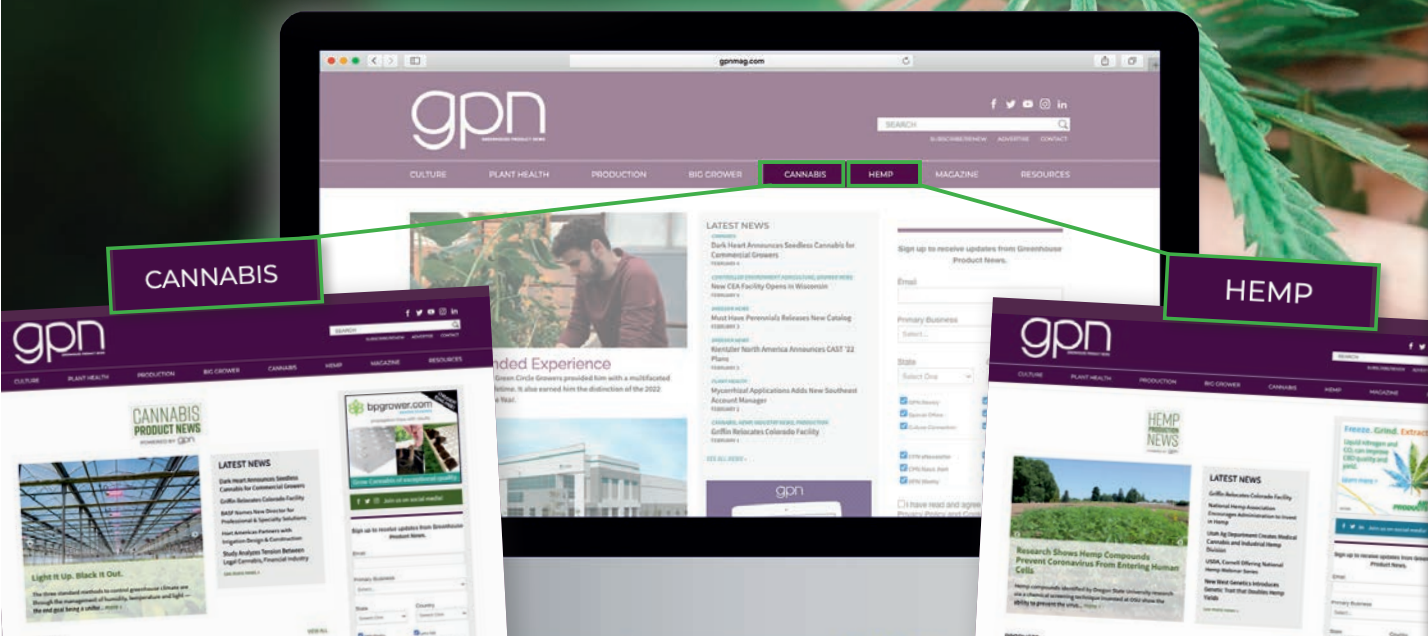
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trial and it scored a 4.67/5 rating in 2021. The varieties Autumn Spice and Brilliant were in the Colorado State University's second year perennial trial and were colorful with a multitude of flowers in mid-September.

The series is hardy to Zone 3 and offers to the consumers a prolific flowering perennial in late summer and early fall when other perennials are waning. This series is underused, but with growers and consumers looking for a tough and hardy perennial with late season color, this series measures up.

### 10. LEUCANTHEMUM 'REALFLOR REAL COMET'

*Planthaven*

I have written about many Shasta Daisy varieties over the past five years, but I have not highlighted the RealFlor collection from PlantHaven. Many of the varieties in this series have been in trial sites since their introduction, in spring production programs, and are available from multiple perennial suppliers. The eleven varieties in this collection are well branched, durable, floriferous and offer a wide range of flower forms.

This collection includes three new varieties: Real Deal, Real Goldcup, and Real Comet. Real Comet has flowers that transition from a large single daisy to recurved white ray petals with bright yellow centers, as depicted in the photo from Colorado State University taken in mid-September. This RealFlor collection offers one of the widest selections of diverse Shasta Daisy varieties in the market. The entire collection is hardy to Zone 5 and mature size will vary from 16 to 36 inches, depending on the variety.

### 11. PENSTEMON DIGITALIS 'DAKOTA BURGUNDY'

*Terra Nova*

Penstemon is the largest genus of flowering plants native to the continental U.S. with a multitude of species and hybrids. Multiple perennial breeders have introduced new series and stand-alone varieties with outstanding ornamental traits. Many of these new hybrids have been in regional trials and are deserving of consideration in perennial production programs. What sets these varieties

apart is the foliage color, plant habit, flower form and vibrant colors.

Penstemon 'Dakota Burgundy' was eye catching and floriferous in the late summer trials last year. This is an improved Dark Towers with a more compact habit, super-sized deep pink flowers and dark glossy foliage. It also produces ornamental seed heads in the fall with application in flower bouquets. Like all Penstemon varieties, it is heat and drought tolerant. It matures at 14 to 28 inches and is hardy to Zone 3. This variety demonstrated prolific flowering, striking contrasting foliage and flowers, and exceptional heat tolerance in the Metrolina North Carolina trial in mid August as depicted in the accompanying photograph. This variety is available from Think Plants and multiple perennial liner suppliers.

### 12. SALVIA NEMOROSA 'APEX WHITE'

*Danziger*

Danziger's research and development innovations in the past five years have been exceptional and have led to the testing, introduction, production and marketing of many unique and excellent new annuals and perennials. I have highlighted the Salvia Sallyfun and Sallyrosa varieties in previous years. The *Salvia nemorosa* Apex collection, composed of Blue, Pink and White, and introduced in 2021, was prominent in multiple trials last summer. The series is first-year flowering and manifested many attributes that are essential in production programs and consumer appeal.

The varieties demonstrated a strong upright habit, dense branching, long spike-like racemes with closely spaced whorls, and large calyxes. This was one of the most floriferous nemorosa series in the summer trials, as shown in the accompanying photograph from the Mast Young Plants container trial. The three colors have similar flower timing, mature at 16 to 18 inches, and are hardy to Zone 4. This series offers versatility and uniformity with production application in 1 and 1.5 gallon programs, and consumer application in containers and landscape beds. All three varieties are components of the Apex Trilogy recipe in the Durabella program. [gpn](#)

