

vaughn's view

BY VAUGHN FLETCHER

# DISTINCTIVE & EXCEPTIONAL PERENNIAL INTRODUCTIONS— PART 4

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*At the Costa Trials, these perennials stood out among more than 160 varieties on display.*

**I**n my three previous Costa articles, I highlighted dynamic annual introductions and top-performing baskets recipes. My evaluation of the trial would be incomplete without an overview of many new perennial introductions for 2022-23.

I have used the word parade to describe the volume of new perennial introductions and their durability, environmental resilience, unique flower colors and floriferousness in the trial during my late February and late April visits. There were over 160 varieties represented by 14 international and domestic flower and perennial breeders. The liners were planted in the trial beds weeks 49 to 50, and my focus in the selection process was heat, humidity, rain tolerance and, most importantly, prolific flowering.

I submitted my first GPN perennial article in 2017, and since that time the quantity and quality of new introductions entered in regional trials have expanded significantly. What has been impressive are the breeding advancements and product development, resulting in exciting new cultivars and improvement in morphological characteristics such as color, size, form, and textures. The benefits of these new varieties are greater disease resistance, heat and drought tolerance, first-year flowering, extended flowering, and multiple application potential.

The Costa perennial trial offers an early glimpse of the development and maturation of these new perennials, which will be manifested later in the summer and fall in multiple regional trials.

## 1. **RUDBECKIA HIRTA 'DAKOTA FLAME'**

*GreenFuse Botanicals*

The Dakota series was introduced in 2020 following over 10 years of revolutionary breeding, development and trialing. So what is revolutionary about this series? It is the first true hirta with Zone 5 hardiness, first-year flowering and day-length neutrality. No cold treatment is required for spring flowering, so the series can be introduced to the market for late spring and early summer sales. Red Shield was introduced in 2020, followed by Gold, and the new Flame for 2022-23, which was in the Costa trial and flowering prolifically. This is a spectacular bicolor with a dark eye and yellow ray petals that will augment the Dakota series with three distinctive hirta varieties. I posted a photo of this variety on my Facebook page and it captured much attention. Flame will create outstanding visual impact at retail and garner significant consumer interest.

## 2. **AGASTACHE 'BETTERBUZZ AMARILLO'**

*Dümmen Orange*

Dümmen Orange has entered the agastache arena with three colorful varieties for 2022-23: 'Betterbuzz Amarillo', 'Betterbuzz Rosa' and 'Betterbuzz Amber'. This is a competitive domain in the horticultural world with myriad varieties differing in color, form and size. It is a treat to see agastache blooming profusely in late April, as this is a mid-season flowering genus in the middle and upper regions of the country. Why the breeding frenzy in agastache? There are many benefits for the producer, landscaper and



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consumer including heat and drought tolerance, first-year flowering, floriferousness, aromatic foliage, and an outstanding pollinator magnet. Betterbuzz Amarillo and Amber were in the trial beds and manifested vibrant and prolific tubular two-lipped inflorescences with a dense habit and prolific flower canopy. I was particularly enamored of the density and abundance of bright yellow flowers of Amarillo. This dwarf series will mature at 12 to 18 inches and is hardy to Zone 6.



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**3. LEUCANTHEMUM SUPERBUM 'MAKE MY DAISY HAPPY'**

*Darwin Perennials*

The Make My Daisy collection is scheduled for a 2024 launch to provide sufficient time for stock buildup. There are two varieties in the initial launch: Happy, a single flowering variety, and Crazy, a semi-double variety, which were both in the trial. I included a photo of Happy from my April visit because I was impressed with the vigor, quantity and purity of the single flowers, the flower size, and the extended flowering period, which is a key benefit for the consumer. Both varieties were flowering in late February and in my late April visit. Some of the key features include: first-year flowering, well-matched height, flower timing and vigor as was demonstrated in the Costa trial. The finished height is 14 to 18 inches and both varieties are hardy to Zone 5a.



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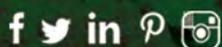
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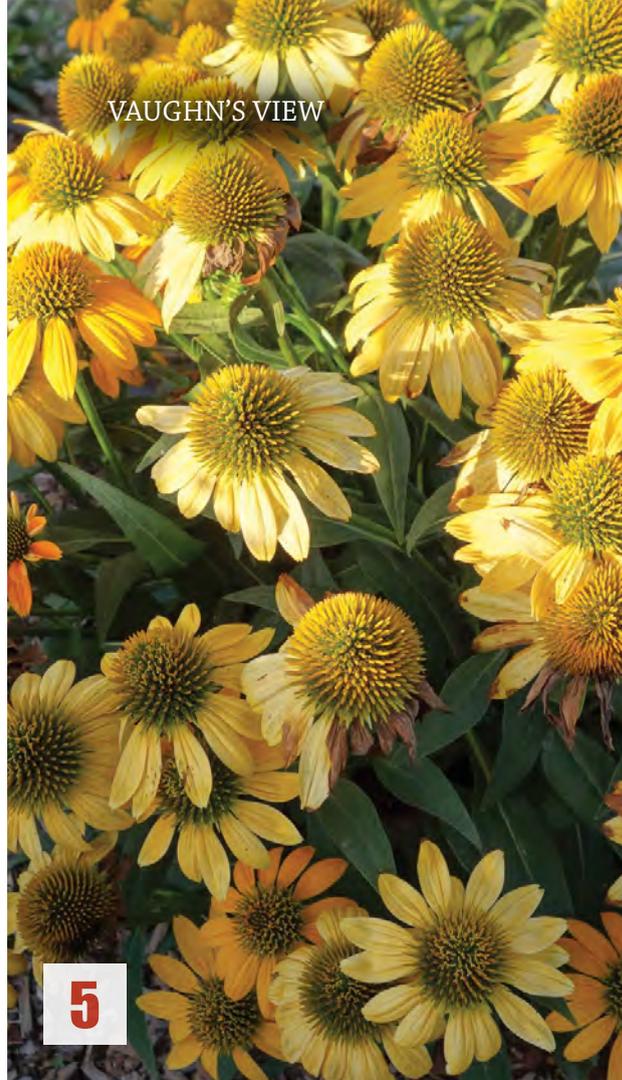
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**4. DELPHINIUM 'DELGENIUS BLUE FABULOSA'**

*Pacific Plug & Liner*

All seven colors in the Delgenius series were in the Costa trial, including the new Blue Fabulosa. This new introduction produced large indigo blue, semi-double racemes with large florets, which characterize the entire series. The Delgenius series has been entered in multiple regional trials with outstanding performance reviews for its heat and sun tolerance, habit, earliness, multiple flower spikes, and prolific flower canopy. I have highlighted the performance and attributes of this series in previous trial articles. The retail presentation is eye catching with the diversity of colors and large upright inflorescences. The series is hardy to Zone 3 and matures at 20 to 24 inches.

**5. ECHINACEA 'ARTISAN YELLOW OMBRE'**

*PanAmerican Seed*

The Artisan Collection, introduced in 2020, offered the first F1 hybrid echinacea individual colors from seed. The collection has expanded from Red Ombre and Soft Orange with the introduction of Yellow Ombre for 2023. This new introduction offers the same traits of others in the collection, including uniformity, consistency, hardiness, vigor and a long flowering cycle of three to four weeks. The golden-yellow flowers of Yellow Ombre were

conspicuous and vibrant on a compact, dense habit. It will be slightly taller and has a more upright growth habit than Red Ombre and Soft Orange. The collection is available in an enhanced seed form and as liners from multiple suppliers. Scheduling and product information is available from the PanAmerican perennial division.

**6. ECHINACEA 'PANAMA RED'**

*Danziger*

'Panama Red' is a significant introduction to the echinacea market, the first echinacea introduced by Danziger, and available in unrooted form from ThinkPlants for 2022-23. It manifested an abundance of flowers displaying a dark red cone, recurved petals, red petal shades, dense branching and minimal retention of spent flowers. This echinacea will be on display and tested in multiple trials sites this summer, and end-of-season evaluations will follow this fall. 'Panama Red' offers a new and exciting option in echinacea production, and I expect to see this variety in wholesale and retail programs next year. ThinkPlants offers a comprehensive technical guide on producing this new echinacea.

**7. GAILLARDIA 'SPINTOP MANGO'**

*Dümmen Orange*

The SpinTop series continues to expand with the addition of Mango for 2023. The series is now comprised of six varieties with matched habits, uniformity, first-year

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flowering and programmability. Many of the varieties are components in the Garden Party recipe program. 'SpinTop Mango', with its deep yellow cone and serrated light yellow petals, was early to flower in the trial with a colorful flower canopy. The presence and importance of this genera is significant as reflected in the breeding and quantity of new series from multiple breeders. Gaillardia varieties have compelling visual impact and strong sell-through at retail, and their importance will continue to expand with new colors and flower forms on the horizon.

### 8. DIANTHUS 'BEAUTIES REBECCA'

*Dümmen Orange*

Five varieties have been added to the Beauties Collection for 2023: Tyra, Tiuu, Vida, Melina and Rebecca, bringing the total to 10 varieties. This is one of the top-selling collections in the market. The Beauties have demonstrated toughness and durability in public and private gardens with a multitude of attributes, including carpet-like growth habit, first-year flowering, vigor, uniformity, heat tolerance and a prolific flower canopy. All of the new varieties were represented in the trial, and I chose to highlight Rebecca

because it is a new color addition, and it embodied all the attributes listed above. Most importantly, it exhibited vibrant magenta flowers positioned above the canopy for an eye-catching display. We currently have over 27 series or collections of dianthus in the marketplace with a wide range of

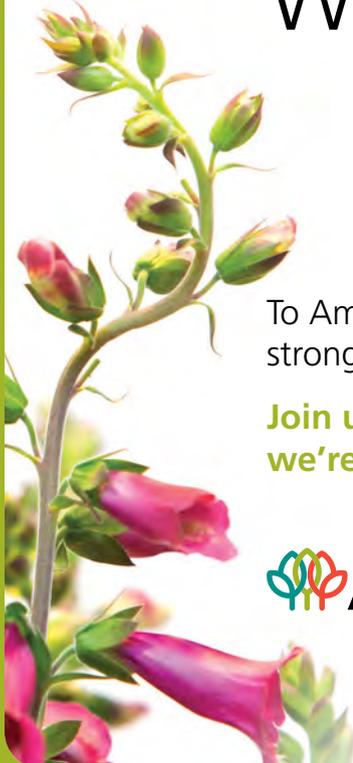
sizes, flower patterns, hardiness, and flower forms. Choosing a dianthus series or collection for a spring program requires some study, trialing, experience and discussion with breeders and peers in the industry. This is a daunting genera to say the least, so selecting the dianthus varieties

that add diversity and value to your spring program is essential.

### 9. COREOPSIS 'GRANDIFLORA REINA SINGLE GIANT GOLD'

*GreenFuse Botanicals*

I have highlighted many coreopsis introductions in the



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Costa trial the past few years, and this new vegetative coreopsis for 2022-23 was highly impactful this year, with extremely large, single flowers positioned above the foliage canopy, exceptional vigor, day-length neutrality and non-stop flowering. It was flowering prolifically in late February and also in late April on my second visit. This variety matures at 12 to 15 inches and is hardy to Zone 5. Reina Single Giant Gold is in the GreenFuse Botanicals First Light program and is available in unrooted form and from multiple liners suppliers for 2022-23.

**10. PEROVSKIA ATRIPLICIFOLIA 'JELENA'**

*Dümmen Orange*

The breeding, trialing and introduction of Perovskia cultivars has advanced significantly since the first cultivar, 'Hybrida', was introduced in England in the 1930s. Throughout the '70s, '80s and '90s, atriplicifolia was the only Perovskia available, and it was awarded the Perennial Plant of the Year in 1995 by the Perennial Plant Association. We now have a wide assortment of cultivars available from multiple perennial breeders. Many of them differ in size and flower shades, and they all have application in landscape sites as accent

components with silver-green foliage, form, flower color and durability in xeriscape plantings. We are also seeing many compact varieties used in patio containers. Perovskia 'Jelena' is the first introduction by Dümmen Orange in this genera, and, based on early performance in the Costa trial, this compact variety, hardy to Zone 5, will have outstanding landscape application and retail appeal. It is early flowering, matures at 18 to 24 inches, and manifests excellent branching and vibrant blue inflorescences that cover the entire plant. This genus has significant benefits, including heat and drought tolerance, and deer and rabbit resistance, and is a pollinator magnet. Perovskia is also now referred to as *Salvia yangii*.

**11. VERONICA LONGIFOLIA 'SKYWARD BLUE'**

*Darwin Perennials*

This new Veronica series for 2023 consists of Blue and Pink, with more colors in the breeding pipeline. The cultivar name definitely describes the dense foliage, durability and upright growth habit with an impressive proliferation of multiple flower spikes rising above the foliage. Both varieties were flowering during my late February and April visits. The mature height is



14 to 18 inches, the flowering window is late spring and summer, and it is hardy to Zone 4b.

**12. AGASTACHE 'MEANT TO BEE ROYAL RASPBERRY'**

*Walters Gardens*

This trial was comprised of many new agastache series, collections and varieties, and the new agastache 'Meant To Bee Royal Raspberry', with its rose-

purple flowers and burgundy calyxes towering above the foliage, was one of the most formidable perennials in the trial. The collection also includes Queen Nectarine with peach-colored flowers and striking, persistent contrasting calyxes. Both varieties mature at 30 to 36 inches, are hardy to Zone 5, and will manifest an outstanding upright habit and stature in the landscape. [gpn](#)

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