

New for 2015

BY CHARLOTTE GERMANE

OPTIMISM IS A cardinal quality among gardeners and what can inspire that more than the luscious images in the seed and plant catalogs that are stacking up on coffee tables all over the United States right now? Those pictures and the enticing descriptions ignite dreams of creating our best gardens yet. That siren call is even more seductive when considering all the new offerings coming into the market each year. The parade of new varieties promises more colors, more sizes (both larger and smaller), more disease resistance, more tolerance for a given climate, with each one sounding better than the next until it all becomes a bit overwhelming.

To help pare down the list of new offerings, I talked with garden writers who tried out these plants in their home gardens, conferred with public garden staffers about which trials demonstrated true winners, and consulted with the growers themselves about their favorites.

Representing a range of regions, those who shared their plant trial feedback include **Mark Dwyer**, director of horticulture at Rotary Botanical Gardens in Janesville, Wisconsin; **“Farmer Fred” Hoffman**, radio and newspaper garden communicator in the Central Valley of California; **Rebecca Sweet**, garden designer and author in Northern California; **Kylee Baumle**, garden author in Northwest Ohio; **Susan Morrison**, garden designer and author in the San Francisco Bay Area; **Stephanie Cohen**, garden writer, horticulture professor, and perennial “diva” in Collegeville, Pennsylvania; **Lisa Colburn**, garden author in Orono, Maine; and **Peggy Hill**, garden writer in Bremen, Alabama.

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ANNUALS & TENDER PERENNIALS



One of the most talked-about new plants is **Illumination® ‘Flame’ *Digitalis***, resulting from a cross between garden foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and a Canary Islands relative called *Isoplexis canariensis*. This pink-and-orange-flowered hybrid garnered compliments from trial gardeners around the country. Mark Dwyer calls this “one of my favorite plants of the year” and says, “I was most amazed with their long bloom period, which extended until frost in some cases. The orange-red blooms have a yellow throat and the flower spires invite attention from both a distance and up close.” Lisa Colburn notes “it bloomed all summer and the color was fabulous. I will definitely plant it again and plant many more in a prominent location!” Susan Morrison was impressed by the vigorous growth and repeat blooms in part shade. Though it is hardy to about USDA Zone 8, it can be grown as an annual in colder climates. Zones 8–11, 11–3. Sunset Western Garden Collection, Southern Living Plant Collection.



***Lavandula x allardii* ‘Meerlo’** is a variegated lavender that Southern Living Plant Collection calls “the most drought and heat tolerant of the lavender species.” Garden designer Rebecca Sweet says, “It truly has the most heavenly lavender fragrance I’ve ever smelled.” While it will reach two to three feet tall and wide, you can keep it compact by cutting one-third of it back after its first flowering. Zones 8–10, 10–3. Sunset Western Garden Collection, Southern Living Plant Collection.



‘Cherry Caramel’ *Phlox drummondii* has late-summer flowers with a cherry-colored center and buff-colored petals. In bloom, the plant gets about one-and-a-half feet tall. Zones 0–0, 12–1. Johnny’s Selected Seeds.



‘Candy Mountain’ sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) blooms at each leaf node, sending branches in all directions. Flowers are a striking burgundy on yellow. Grow this eight- to 10-foot-tall annual in the back of a border or in a cutting garden. Zones 0–0, 12–1. W. Atlee Burpee & Co.



A purple-brown Rex begonia that sports a curling silver pattern on each leaf, **‘Jurassic Silver Swirl’ (*Begonia x tuberhybrida*)** is eye-catching in a container on its own, or mixed with other shade lovers. Mounds to 16 inches tall and one foot wide. Zones 10–11, 10–1. Ball Horticultural Co.



Euphorbia Diamond Delight™ is double-flowered, giving it twice the impact as it mounds to one foot tall and wide. Peggy Hill, who gardens in USDA Zone 7, says, “I grew it in full, blazing sun with very little supplementary water. Other white euphorbias, like Diamond Frost™, remind me of baby’s breath, but Diamond Delight’s flowers are much larger, and they cover the plant in a sheet of white.” Mark Dwyer particularly appreciates that “the double blossoms on this drought-tolerant selection are self-cleaning and give an ‘airy’ look to beds, borders, and containers.” Zones 10–11, 11–1. Proven Winners.

PERENNIALS



***xSedoro* ‘Blue Elf’** belongs to a brand new genus: It is the first hybrid between *Sedum* and *Orostachys*. Its breeder, Chris Hansen, says it offers “the best of both parents,” combining dark pink flowers from the *Sedum*, and steel-gray, tufted rosette foliage from the *Orostachys*. The succulent is only three inches tall and spreads to 15 inches wide. The late-summer flowers attract pollinators and scent the air with a grape-soda fragrance. Zones 4–9, 9–1. SunSparkler Sedums.

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COURTESY OF KYLEE BAUMLE

Dendranthema 'Snowy Igloo' is an upgrade of 'Frosty Igloo' with improved vigor, habit, and flowering. Kylee Baumle trialed the hardy chrysanthemum and reports that "it kept wanting to bloom from the moment I planted it in late spring." The plant can grow up to 20 inches tall with a spread of 30 inches. Zones 5–9, 9–4. Blooms of Bressingham.



BALL HORTICULTURAL CO.

Astilbe chinensis 'Little Vision in Pink' is a dwarf form of 'Vision in Pink', growing just 16 inches tall and wide with a summertime profusion of pink flowers. Part of Ball Seeds' Darwin Perennials line, it is purported to be more sun and drought tolerant than other selections. In Mark Dwyer's trial garden, "specimens in full afternoon sun did quite well," he notes. "The compact form and stature of this all-star make it perfect in mass plantings." Zones 4–8, 8–2. Ball Horticultural Co.



COURTESY OF DARRELL PROBST

Coreopsis verticillata 'Berry Chiffon' is a tickseed that stays where you put it, due to sterile flowers. This highly mildew-resistant variety attracts butterflies. As temperatures drop, the raspberry color of the flower's eye spreads into the creamy petals, but the plant itself goes dormant later than other coreopsis. Zones 4–9, 9–1. Walters Gardens.



WALTERS GARDENS

Growing unsupported up to six feet tall, **Clematis recta Serious Black™** offers striking black foliage that contrasts dramatically with its white flowers. "This clematis is by far the darkest on the market with near-black spring foliage," says Mark Dwyer. "The foliage does fade to a greenish maroon in the heat of summer but a full sun location will bring out the darkest foliage during the early growing season." Zones 3–9, 8–1. Walters Gardens.



HIGHCOUNTRYGARDENS.COM

Red Mountain® Flame is an ice plant (*Delosperma dyeri*) with hot-hued flowers ranging from red to orange instead of the usual magenta. Fire retarding—like all ice plants—it's even less thirsty than most, and will rebloom lightly with summer rain. This one-inch-tall succulent will spread up to 18 inches. Zones 6–9, 10–5. High Country Gardens.



HIGHCOUNTRYGARDENS.COM

'Intermountain Beauty' is a selection of *Gaura lindheimeri* native to Utah. Topping out at 22 inches tall and 15 inches wide, it's a bit shorter than other gauras, but shares their drought tolerance and resistance to deer and rabbits. Its wands of white flowers bloom all summer. Zones 5–9, 9–6. High Country Gardens.

EDIBLES



W. ATLEE BURPEE & CO.

Prime Ark® Freedom blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*) is the first thornless version of the primocane blackberries that produce two crops a year. This new release from the University of Arkansas has canes that reach six feet tall and wide. Good flavor and disease resistance make this an excellent choice for home gardens. Zones 4–8, 8–4. W. Atlee Burpee & Co.

Additional new edibles

- **'Petite Snap-Greens' snap pea** (*Pisum sativum*) is the first introduction in the new Calvin's Peas™ line from the original breeder of snap peas, Calvin Lamborn. With smaller leaflets than regular snaps, also enjoy this cultivar for its edible shoots and blossoms. Johnny's Selected Seeds.
- **'Cloudy Day' hybrid tomato** (*Solanum lycopersicum*) will take cool, long summers in stride. It also resists early and late blight. The plant produces four- to five-ounce tomatoes in about 70 days. W. Atlee Burpee & Co.
- Great for containers or small spaces, **Pixie® grapes** (*Vitis vinifera*) reach only 20 inches tall and about 12 inches wide, producing tiny bunches of sweet, tart fruit the first year. Available varieties are 'Riesling', 'Pinot Meunier Purple', 'Pinot Meunier White', and 'Cabernet Franc'. Zones 5–8, 8–5. Plug Connection®.
- Heirloom Vietnamese **'Bac Lieu' cilantro** (*Coriandrum sativum*) adds a note of citrus to the classic flavor. It grows like regular cilantro, but has more filigreed leaves. Renee's Garden.



RENEE'S GARDEN

'Litt'l Bites' cherry tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*) is ideal for window boxes or small containers. This cascading tomato grows only about 12 inches tall and 20 inches wide, covered in summer with small flavorful fruits. Zones 0–0, 12–5. Renee's Garden.



FISHER FARMS

Winner of a Retailers Choice prize at the 2014 Farwest Trade Show in Oregon, **Lo-Hugger™ American cranberry** (*Vaccinium macrocarpon* 'Lohzam') serves as both a fast-growing groundcover and an edible. This selection grows to six inches tall and spreads up to three feet. It boasts three-season interest with pink spring blooms, summer berries, and bronzed evergreen foliage in the fall. Zones 2–7, 7–1. UpShoot LLC.



JOHNNY'S SELECTED SEEDS, JOHNNYSEEDS.COM

Kalettes™ are a brand new vegetable created by crossing kale and Brussels sprouts (*Brassica oleracea*). The Brussels sprouts contribute the tall stalks, with edible, two-inch, kale-like rosettes growing up the sides. Ready to harvest in 110 to 138 days, they can be eaten raw or cooked and have a mild, nutty flavor. They are purported to pack quite a nutritional punch as well. Zones 0–0, 8–1. Johnny's Selected Seeds.

TREES, SHRUBS, & VINES



DAVID AUSTIN ROSES

Maid Marion rose (*Rosa* 'Austobias') is one of four new rose varieties from David Austin. The fully double, clear pink blooms have lighter pink outer petals. The flowers exude a fragrance of myrrh, then clove as they mature. This shrubby, compact rose reaches three feet tall with equal spread, and blooms repeatedly from early summer through frost. Zones 5–9, 9–5. David Austin Roses.



MONROVIA

If you love the look of the jacaranda tree (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) but don't have room for a 40-foot specimen, now there is a six-foot true dwarf version. Drought tolerant and sun-loving, **Jacaranda 'Bonsai Blue'** produces purple flowers in late spring that attract hummingbirds. Zones 9–11, 12–10. Monrovia.

Additional new trees, shrubs, and vines

- Shade-loving **Red Rhapsody® Chinese hydrangea vine** (*Schizophragma elliptifolium* 'MonLaBaHe Blush') puts out shiny red leaves that contrast beautifully with creamy bracts before turning green. Growing to 10 to 15 feet tall, the self-clinging stems will not damage trees or other supporting structures. Zones 6–9, 9–6. Monrovia.
- Dwarf **Milestone™ sweet gum** (*Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Milestoz') has all the flashy fall color of the species but behaves itself in a small garden, topping out between 10 and 20 feet tall. It doesn't form spiny fruits, and the leaves are only half the size of the species' leaves. Bred by Warren County Nursery. Zones 5–9, 9–1. UpShoot LLC.



PROVEN WINNERS

Azurri Blue Satin® is a new seedless rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*). Its large, blue-violet flowers appear in summer on a plant that can reach up to 12 feet tall and six feet wide. Zones 5–9, 10–3. Proven Winners.

Yuki Cherry Blossom™ is a diminutive pink-flowering *Deutzia*. Mark Dwyer notes that the two-foot by two-foot mounding shrub is "not only covered by a profusion of pink spring blooms but is quite tough in a range of soils. As a specimen or in mass plantings in full sun, it contributes strong spring color, summer form, and fall color that develops late in the season." Zones 5–8, 8–5. Proven Winners.



PROVEN WINNERS



PROVEN WINNERS

Castle Gold™ blue holly (*Ilex xmeserveae* 'Gold Princess') will illuminate landscapes with evergreen, lime-gold foliage that matures to a deeper gold. It grows six feet in height and width. Zones 5–9, 9–5. Proven Winners.



BAILEY NURSERIES

Highlights™ arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Janed Gold') grows eight to 12 feet tall and spreads four to five feet, making it well suited for small gardens. Its bright yellow foliage provides year-round color. Zones 3–7, 7–1. PlantHaven International, Bailey Nurseries, Monrovia.



COURTESY OF JOHN LEWIS, JLPN

Growing eight feet tall and five feet wide, **Marleys Pink™ Japanese snowbell** (*Styrax japonicus*) is a weeping form that has larger, glossier leaves than the species. The pink, bell-shaped, slightly fragrant flowers bloom profusely in early summer. Zones 6–8, 8–6. UpShoot LLC.

Wholesale Nurseries/ Marketing Consortia

Visit these companies' websites to locate retail sources for their plants.

- Bailey Nurseries**, www.baileynurseries.com.
- Ball Horticultural Co.**, www.ballhort.com.
- Blooms of Bressingham**, www.bloomsofbressingham.com.
- Monrovia**, www.monrovia.com.
- PlantHaven International**, www.planthaven.com.
- PlugConnection**, www.plugconnection.com.
- Proven Winners**, www.provenwinners.com.
- Southern Living Plant Collection**, www.southernlivingplants.com.
- Sunset Western Garden Collection**, www.sunsetwesterngarden.com.
- SunSparkler Sedums**, www.sunsparklersedums.com.
- UpShoot**, www.upshoorthort.com.
- Walters Gardens**, www.waltersgardens.com.

Retail Sources

- David Austin Roses**, Tyler, TX. www.davidaustinroses.com.
- High Country Gardens**, Santa Fe, NM. www.highcountrygardens.com.
- Johnny's Selected Seeds**, Winslow, ME. www.johnnyseeds.com.
- Renee's Garden**, Felton, CA. www.reneesgarden.com.
- W. Atlee Burpee & Company**, Warminster, PA. www.burpee.com.