

New Plants for 2022

BY RITA PELCZAR

THE LATEST plant and seed catalogs are arriving in our mailboxes and piling up on our desks. Chock full of drool-worthy pictures and descriptions of the latest varieties, they tempt us to expand our beds or add another container garden so we can include at least a few of these new selections. We've canvassed horticultural professionals from across the country who trial the newest plants developed by breeders or discovered through careful observation by growers. Here are some of their recommendations.



SYNGENTA



Begonia 'Green Streak'



Calylophus Ladybird™ *Sunglow*

ANNUALS

The Jurassic™ series of *Begonia rex* hybrids from Ball Ingenuity boasts large leaves in bold colors and patterns. “Who needs flowers when you have foliage colors like these do?” says John Outer, trial gardens director at University of Georgia in Athens. “In a year when most bedding begonias did not perform well, these plants thrived in deep shade all summer long,” he says. Two particularly dramatic selections are *Begonia* ‘Green Streak’, with its silvery leaves accented by dark green veins, and ‘Pink Shades’, whose saturated pink inner leaves are surrounded by dark margins with lighter pink spots.

Outer also likes the Beacon® *impatiens* from PanAmerican Seed. Available in six colors and two mixes, the plants are “much larger than your grandmother’s *impatiens*,” he says. “Ours received full sun in the morning and shade in the afternoon, and always looked good.” These reliable performers are highly resistant to downy mildew.

Ladybird™ *Sunglow* Texas primrose (*Calylophus* hybrid) from Proven Winners is a favorite of Rodger J. Tschanz, trial garden manager at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. It’s a prolific bloomer, for sunny spots, requiring minimal care. Bright yellow flowers cover

the spreading plant that grows only four to eight inches tall. “It can be used as a ground cover or semi-trailing filler in containers,” says Tschanz, who observes that it is attractive to many native pollinators.

The Spectra™ New Guinea *impatiens* from Syngenta is available in five colors. Their mounded habit works well in beds, patio containers, or hanging baskets. They were resilient additions to the Michigan State University (MSU) trial gardens in East Lansing, last year. “Shortly after we planted these outside, we had an unexpected temperature drop, below 40 degrees. We expected our New Guinea *impatiens* to abort their flower buds due to the cold shock, but that somehow that

didn’t occur,” says trial garden manager Daedre McGrath. They put on “a season-long show of huge flowers covering the plants.”

A gigantic strawflower, *Bracteantha* ‘Granvia Gold’ from Suntory Flowers was another winning performer at the MSU Gardens. It “looked great all season. Everyone commented on it as they passed by. The flowers are long lasting in the garden and also make excellent dried flowers,” says McGrath.

Kendra Hutchins, manager of Cornell’s annual flower trials in Ithaca, New York, agrees. “Granvia Gold’ was incredibly vigorous right out of the gate,” she says, “and pumped out an abundance of cheerful yellow flowers on sturdy stems.”

Dahlia City Lights™ ‘Neon’ from SelectaOne, was another favorite from the Cornell trials. “The flowers are a deeply saturated hue of pink, and they rise above the foliage so they don’t get lost. The plants are well-branched, compact, and vigorous,” says Hutchins, who noted that plants had very little powdery mildew, despite their unusually rainy summer. “This cultivar attracted bees, butterflies, and birds, and is versatile enough to be used in the landscape or in containers.

Hutchins also recommends *Heliotropium* Augusta® ‘Lavender’ from Proven



Impatiens Spectra ‘Orange’



Heliotropium Augusta® 'Lavender'

Winners. “This plant has an old-fashioned feel, reminding me of Victorian gardens,” says Hutchins. A mature plant grows two feet tall and three feet wide. “It has an upright form but is also slightly recumbent, so that its lilac flowers drape gracefully across bright green foliage,” says Hutchins. It was awarded the “Best Novelty” plant in annual trials at Colorado State University (CSU). Trial garden coordinator Jim Klett says, “The soft lavender flowers were showy and had a nice fragrance in the heat of the afternoon. Plants had good uniformity and were a favorite of pollinators.”

“Best of Show” at the CSU trials went to *Rudbeckia* ‘Sunbeckia Ophelia’ from Flamingo Holland/Bull. “The gigantic yellow flowers on this plant glow in the sun and attracted attention from all over the garden. The large flowers create a near canopy of yellow color that creates enormous flower power,” says Klett. Although it can be grown as an annual, it may be perennial in USDA Hardiness Zones 7 to 10.

Denise Mullins, director of product innovation at Smith Gardens in Bellingham, Washington, loves the large flowers and trailing habit of *Sanguna*® **Mango Punch** petunia from Syngenta. Its blooms are peachy orange, overlaid with yellow, it looks almost tie-dyed. “It makes a great hanging basket—and I am in love with the color,” Mullins says.

Petunia **Itsy**™ **Magenta**, from Syngenta, performed well in the Cornell tri-



Colocasia esculenta 'Waikiki'

als. “What these flowers lack in size, they make up for in numbers! The petite flowers carpet the ground, creating an impressive color display,” says Hutchins. Plants top out at four to six inches tall with a width of 18 to 24 inches. “The foliage is vigorous and well-branched, but with a controlled habit, making it an excellent choice for the landscape.”

PERENNIALS

Richard Hawke, plant evaluation manager at Chicago Botanic Garden, is a fan of the *Hibiscus* ‘Dark Mystery’ (Zones 4–9) from Walters Gardens.

This rose mallow grows about five feet tall and wide in full sun or part shade. “The burgundy leaves of ‘Dark Mystery’ are beautiful on their own, but the large cherry-eyed, white flowers are a nice late summer event!” says Hawke.

Another of Hawke’s recommendations is *Eupatorium perfoliatum* ‘Polished Brass’ (Zones 3–8), a selection of the native American boneset from Brent Horvath at Intrinsic Perennial Gardens. “It’s refreshing when big plants are just allowed to be big, and ‘Polished Brass’ is a big one! It’s also one of the best pollinator plants that I’ve ever seen—the pure white



Hibiscus 'Dark Mystery'

flowers cover it from top to bottom in the late season,” says Hawke. Plants grow four feet tall and wide in full sun to part shade.

***Vernonia* 'Summer's End'** (Zones 4–8) is the latest ironweed introduction from Chicagoland Grows. Its mature size of this hybrid is 42 inches tall and wide, “midway between the taller 'Summer's Surrender' (48 inches) and the shorter



Origanum 'Drops of Jupiter'

'Summer's Swan Song' (36 inches),” says Hawke. “I love that it attracts more pollinators than the others in side-by-side trials. And that's saying a lot since ironweeds in general are phenomenal pollinator plants!” he says.

“***Colocasia esculenta* 'Waikiki'** is an exquisite specimen that must be grown to be believed,” says Tony Avent, proprietor of

Juniper Level Botanic Garden (JLBG) and Plant Delights Nursery in Raleigh, North Carolina. A Plant Delights/JLBG introduction of a new John Cho hybrid, this elephant ears matures to three-and-a-half feet tall and five feet wide, its corrugated green leaves emerge with a dark back that changes from purple to green, while a white center with a purple dot develops on the front. “The purple overlay quickly expands over the white and then flows into the veins,” says Avent. “By the time the leaf matures, the central pattern and veins are entirely purple.” It is hardy in Zones 7b to 10b.

***Iris* × *ampliflora* 'Ming Treasure'** (Zones 6b–9b), also from Plant Delights Nursery, was discovered in China in 2013. “'Ming Treasure' forms a giant three-foot-tall-by-six-foot-wide evergreen clump of basal fans of arching, green, four-inch-wide leaves,” says Avent. In North Carolina, where flowering begins in early March and lasts for four to six weeks, “clumps are topped with five-foot-tall, branched stalks of 20 to 30 large, five-inch wide, lavender-blue flowers,” says Avent, who adds, “although it has some sun tolerance, it performs far better in light shade.”



Pennisetum alopecuroides
Prairie Winds® 'Lemon
Squeeze'



Alcea 'Purple Rain'

The heat- and drought- tolerant ***Origanum* 'Drops of Jupiter'** (Zones 4–9) from Walter's Gardens provides season-long interest at the MSU Trial Gardens. “The chartreuse foliage brightens up the perennial garden, especially when other plants are out of flower. Many tiny pink flowers adorn the plant for part of the summer, attracting pollinators of all kinds,” says McGrath. This ornamental oregano grows two feet tall and two to three feet wide and thrives in full sun.

Another option to provide colorful contrast to your borders or containers, **Prairie Winds® 'Lemon Squeeze'** foun-

tain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*, Zones 5–9) from Walters Gardens boasts arching chartreuse-gold leaves that won't burn in the sun. Copper panicles appear in mid-summer on plants that grow 30 to 36 inches tall and 24 to 30 inches wide.

Jelitto Perennial Seeds is offering *Alcea* 'Purple Rain', the newest member in its Spotlight Series. Growing to about six feet tall, this truly perennial hollyhock flaunts single, dark blue-violet flowers beginning in the first year from May to October. It also attracts pollinators.

SHRUBS AND TREES

There are four new colors in the popular **Perfecto Mundo® azaleas**: Double White, Double Dark Pink, Red, and Orange. These reblooming azaleas from Proven Winners flower in both spring and fall and are hardy in Zones 6 to 9. They are disease resistant and compact, growing two-and-a-half to three feet tall and three to four feet wide. "Perfecto Mundo Double Dark Pink azalea has proven to be one of the longest-blooming azaleas in our trials," says Natalie Carmolli of Spring Meadow Nursery, Inc., in Grand Haven, Michigan.



Perfecto Mundo® Red azalea

Designer Teresa Watkins is installing these azaleas in her clients' gardens as well as her own home landscape in central Florida. "You notice the incredible double blooms immediately. The reblooming blossoms are full, layered in rich vibrant colors, against the background of dark green foliage." Their compact shape requires little if any pruning, "and that this beautiful shrub is resistant to insects and disease is icing on the cake to my clients," Watkins adds.



Philadelphia 'Pearls of Perfume'

Philadelphia 'Pearls of Perfume' from Plantipp "packs a punch for floriferous fragrant flowers. And being on a compact plant is something home gardeners are looking for," says Maria Zampini, president of UpShoot LLC. Hardy to Zone 5, the shrub grows to four feet tall and two feet wide in five years so it will fit into even a small landscape.

Zampini says she has seen an increase in the desire for native plants. One that caught her eye recently is **Mystic Ruby™ buckeye** (*Aesculus x bushii* 'Aaron #1') from JN Plant Selections. Although initially considered hardy to Zone 5, it has grown well in Zone 3, so it's likely much hardier than other buckeyes. Useful as a small specimen tree it grows 14 feet tall and six feet wide. In spring, its pinkish-red flowers stand out boldly against the dark green leaves.

Fairytrail Bride® Cascade Hydrangea® is a hybrid from Europe, now offered in the U.S. by Spring Meadow Nursery/Proven Winners. It bears white lace cap flowers on horizontal to trailing stems all summer long. At a mature size of four feet tall and wide, it makes a spectacular specimen in a large container or a sunny border, and it's ideal for cascading over a retaining wall.

EDIBLES

Everleaf Thai Towers basil, from Pan-American Seed, produces masses of licorice-flavored green leaves—great for Thai cuisine—on purple stems. What makes this Thai basil stand out is its narrow columnar habit. Tschanz, from the University of Guelph, says "its tall and compact habit are suitable for both containers and in the landscape."



Everleaf Thai Towers basil



'Dragonfly' sweet pepper



'Miss Hong' Chinese cabbage



'Purple Zebra' tomato

Garden writer and radio and television commentator, Charlie Nardozzi agrees, "I grew Everleaf Thai Towers last summer in my garden, and it is a beautiful plant."

Nardozzi also likes **'Miss Hong' Chinese cabbage** from Johnny's Selected Seeds. Its thick, crunchy outer leaves, with their dramatic dark red color, are great for garnishes, salads, and kimchi. The interior leaves are very tender.

A 2022 All American Selections (AAS) winner, **'Dragonfly' sweet pepper**, bred by Bejo Seeds, produces thick-walled fruit that starts out green, morphing to deep

purple before turning bright red. Delicious at all stages, the fruit is borne high on the plant so it's easy to reach. (For more about AAS winning varieties, see page 44.)

'Purple Zebra' tomato, distributed by A.P. Whaley Seed Company, is another 2022 AAS winner. The dark red fruits boast bold green stripes on the outside, with a deep mahogany interior. It has a complex flavor, good tolerance to cracking and splitting, and excellent disease resistance.

So are these new varieties improvements over your old favorites? They

certainly offer some tempting options. The best way to determine if these, or other recently released selections, will become new favorites is to grow them in your garden. At worst—you will better appreciate those tried-and-true varieties you've been growing for years. At best—you will discover some fabulous new plants that add just what your garden needed.

Contributing Editor Rita Pelczar writes and gardens from her home in western North Carolina.