Top-Performing Perennials and Let's Try Something New



News and commentary for the perennial market

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE | greenPROFIT MAGAZINE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2022

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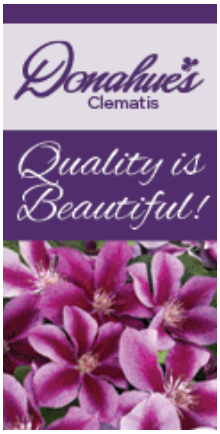
Perennial PULSE

News and commentary on the global perennial plant market

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Perennials: Past, Present & Future
Top Performers
Top-Performing Roses
Ask Paul
Hey, Early Birds











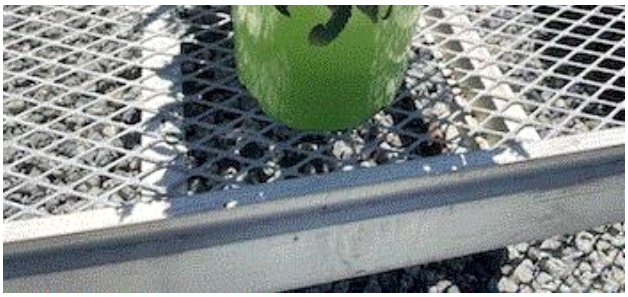
Perennials: Past, Present & Future

I had the opportunity to attend and present at the ProGreen Expo in Denver, Colorado, last week. I arrived about four hours before a big winter storm dumped nearly 12 in. of snow overnight, and fortunately, was able to leave on time two days later even when over 4,000 flights across the country were cancelled due to adverse weather.

My presentation, titled “Perennials: Past, Present & Future,” featured numerous tried-and-true perennials from the past, recent introductions with potential, and a few up-and-coming varieties. I surely can’t cover them all here, but here’s a few perennials I featured in this presentation:

Salvia Midnight Rose





Midnight Rose is a *Salvia nemorosa* type from Dümmen Orange that first caught my eye at PP&L's salvia trial at CAST last summer. It has tons of flower power, and the dark flower stems and calyxes look great even after the plant is past its prime flowering. Midnight Rose is a great rebloomer and hardy to Zone 3.

Rudbeckia Little Goldstar



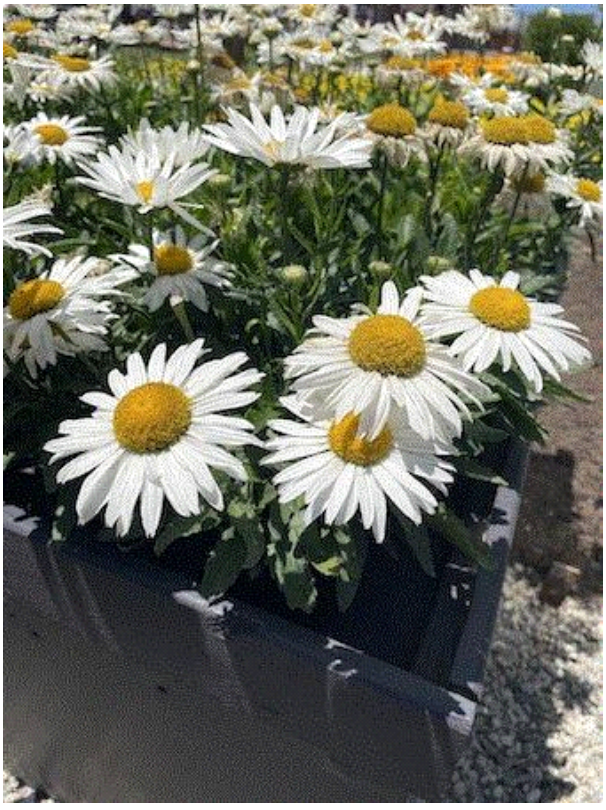
Rudbeckia fulgida var. sullivantii Little Goldstar, originally discovered by Jelitto Seed, is a vegetatively propagated cultivar that's been gaining popularity with growers, retailers and landscapers over the past few years. It’s more compact (just 14-in. tall) and more floriferous than Goldsturm. Hardy to Zone 4.

Hibiscus Dark Mystery



If you love hardy hibiscus as much as I do, you'll absolutely dig this one from Walters Gardens. Dark Mystery provides the perfect backdrop with its deep, dark purple foliage and huge 8- to 9-in. white blush-pink flowers with cherry red eyes and dark veining. Dark Mystery forms nicely rounded 5.5-ft. tall and round bushes and is hardy to Zone 4.

Leucanthemum White Lion



Sure, shasta daisies are incredibly popular, but the cultivars of the past were more challenging to produce for specific sales windows. This is where White Lion, a new seed cultivar from Kieft Seed, is going to fit in. Besides its flower power, White Lion is truly a first-year flowering perennial and doesn't require vernalization for flowering. It also doesn't require long days for flowering. These attributes allow White Lion to be produced and sold throughout the year, including fall programs. Give this Zone 4 seed cultivar a try.



Top Performers

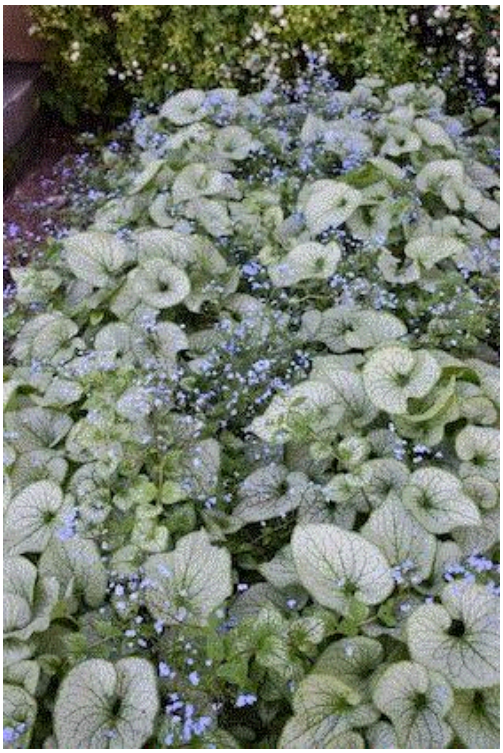
While at ProGreen, I attended a presentation outlining the top-performing plants in trials at Colorado State University last year. Here are the top performers and a few of the notable attributes observed:

Achillea Firefly Sunshine



Vibrant yellow flowers provided a lot of color and with a long-lasting bloom. Dark green foliage also made the flower color stand out. It had superior qualities with a more compact growth habit that didn't lodge, despite overhead watering, and had excellent winter survival. It was also noted that it didn't spread around the garden, which is a definite plus. From Walters Gardens/Proven Winners.

Brunnera Alchemy Silver



This great plant can brighten up a shady area with a constant display of beautiful silver foliage. Plants are vigorous and are covered by a delicate cloud of light blue flowers from about May into June. Leaves are relatively thick and stands up well with strong stems to create a very attractive and uniform growth habit. From Terra Nova Nurseries.

Eupatorium Euphoria Ruby



Shorter and more compact than the species, this is a nice medium-sized plant for the modern landscape. This was a unanimous choice for the “Top Performer” award with dependable light ruby/lilac-colored flowers that combine well with dark leaves and stems. It was noted to be an

excellent pollinator plant. From Darwin Perennials.

Perovskia CrazyBlue





Plants were noted to have superior flowering and growth habit. The flowers have a long-lasting bloom period and the violet-blue flowers last longer than other perovskia. Uniform plants had interlacing branching and sturdy stems that kept it from lodging and maintained an attractive appearance all season. It's a mid-sized plant about 3 to 4 ft. in height. From Darwin Perennials.

Sedum Prima Angelina



Great neon-yellow foliage makes this an excellent foliage plant in the summer and it's also quite showy in the winter with a nice shade of red. The spreading growth habit is very uniform and a great choice with rock gardens or combined with other sedums for additional color contrast. Prima Angelina is superior to the straight Angelina with better branching and growth habit, while also being less brittle. From Darwin Perennials.

Veronica Moody Blues Mauve Improved



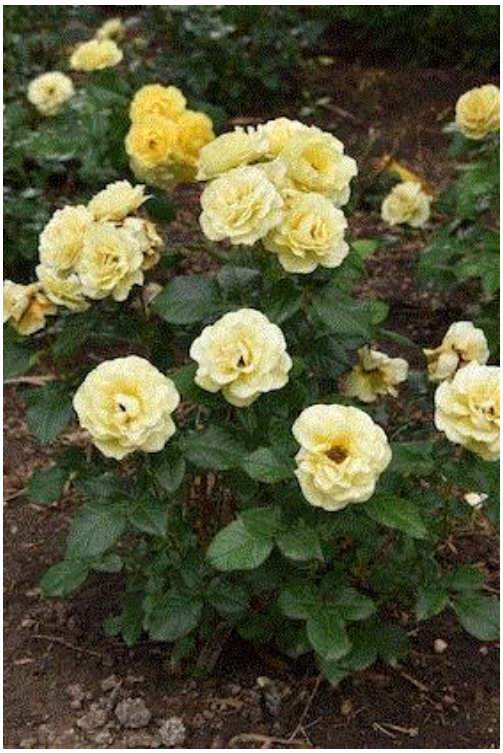
Impressive vibrant, mauve-colored blooms covered the plants at peak and repeated later in the season. Well-branched plants were compact and very uniform with 100% winter survival. It has the added bonus of being a good bloomer the first year in the garden. From Darwin Perennials.



Top-Performing Roses

There were two top-performing roses at the Colorado State University trials:

Rosa Sunbeam Veranda



Glossy, dark green foliage made the bright yellow flower color even more stunning. Blooming started in June and lasted well into September. The compact size makes this a great choice for smaller gardens spaces. Plants had excellent winter hardiness. From Star Roses and Plants.

Rosa Cherry Frost



Abundant bright red flowers and good disease resistance make this a good climbing rose for Colorado. Clusters of small flowers kept repeating throughout the growing season in flushes for long-lasting color. It had excellent winter survival. From Star Roses and Plants.



Ask Paul

I thought I'd propose a new feature for the newsletter. Beginning with the next issue, I'd like to try to have an "Ask Paul" section in the newsletter. Perhaps I can come up with a better name, but what I envision is featuring a question of the week from an anonymous reader and then me, or possibly even another industry expert, will provide the answer or thoughts regarding the question.



Pictures are welcome and even encouraged. Nothing beats a tough question alongside good visuals.

To get started, I'll need your help. Please send your questions and I'll begin this new feature in the next newsletter.

Please send your questions to paul@opelgrowers.com. Please specify this is for *Perennial Pulse* in your subject line to help keep me organized.

Hey, Early Birds

If you're a planner, like to be organized or perhaps a procrastinator like me, I encourage you to consider registering early for these top industry events:

Cultivate '22



In my opinion, Cultivate is one of our industry's best events. There are always great educational sessions (I'll be presenting one on PGRs), hundreds of exhibitors, thousands of attendees and countless networking opportunities. I've gone every year since 1993 and plan to continue going each year for as long as I can foresee.

Pre-registration opens next week. There's an added benefit for those who register next week. You've heard the phrase, "The early bird gets the worm"—well, in this case, the early bird gets the *room*. Anyone who registers during the week of February 14-25 will get a pre-assigned date during the week of March 7 to reserve hotel accommodations.

Don't worry—if you're unable to register during this period, there's plenty of time and hotel rooms available. General registration opens March 15, 2022. I'll be covering this event in more detail in future newsletters, but I encourage you to be an early bird and pre-register.

Click HERE for more event info.

PPA Symposium



If you're passionate about perennials and looking for a perennial-focused venue, then I have an event for you. I'm referring to the Perennial Plant Association's 2022 National Symposium. The symposium will be held in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, from August 1-5, 2022. Like in past years, this year's National Symposium will be packed full of tours, educational sessions and networking all leading to a perennial good time.

The early bird registration deadline is June 24, 2022 and final registration deadline is July 22, 2022.

Click HERE for event information.

Thanks for reading this edition of *Perennial Pulse*. My email is ppilon@ballpublishing.com if you have any comments, article suggestions or if you'd just like to say "hello."

I hope you're having a great start to the New Year!

Paul Pilon
Editor-at-Large—*Perennial Pulse*

Director of Growing - Opel Growers

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