

# MICHIGAN GARDENER

MAY 2019 • MICHIGANGARDENER.COM • YOUR GUIDE TO GREAT LAKES GARDENING

NEW PLANTS

## New Annuals for 2019

### Pruning

Grafted ornamental trees

### Perennials

Heucherella

### Feature

How to build healthy soil

### Garden to Table

Spring carrots

### Plant Focus

Witch hazel

**FREE**

Please thank  
our advertisers  
in this issue

# Coleus: Color Clouds 'Spicy'

Looking for a dramatic plant to fill a large contemporary container or to soften an in-ground space along a shady garden path? Check out Coleus Color Clouds 'Spicy' for the perfect pop of color to spice up any area with a green backdrop.

Large, spade-shaped foliage is covered in harvest gold, patterned with magenta and hot pink. Veins have a seersucker effect in the summer, adding to the overall interest of this great plant. Leaf edges are serrated and slightly lobed. Coleus are invaluable at making a patchwork quilt of color in the shade.

**Height:** 10 inches. **Width:** 30 inches.

**Light:** Part shade to full shade.

Terra Nova Nurseries





Terra Nova Nurseries

# Artemisia: Makana Silver

This striking wormwood comes to our mainland shore from the island of Maui in Hawaii. It was a showstopper last summer at the trade shows and in the garden trials, rating top scores across all categories. You will simply be compelled to go up and touch the soft, feathery mound that can be trained as a small topiary, a specimen annual in a container, or a dynamic annual hedge in the landscape. The silver color is the perfect foil for pastels, hot colors or cool blue tones, giving gardeners countless options. This fast-growing, billowy tropical prefers good drainage and, once established, is easy care, drought and heat tolerant, and avoided by animal browsers.

# perennial perspectives

## Heucherella

Coral Bells + Foamflower =  
Foamy Bells

What do you get when you hybridize one genus with another genus? An *intergeneric hybrid*. The man-made genus *Heucherella* represents the intergeneric hybrid between two different but related genera: *Heuchera* and *Tiarella*. The name *Heucherella* is a combination of those two scientific names. Even the common name for *Heucherella* (foamy bells) is a blend of the parents' common names: coral bells and foamflower.



Karen Bovio

*Heucherella's* attractive foliage, including many different foliage colors, is mostly derived from *Heuchera*, which is generally used as the female parent. *Tiareella*,

typically the male (pollen) parent, contributes a more profuse flowering habit and, depending on the species of *Tiarella* used, different foliage shapes.

### Timeline of hybridization

The best-known heucherella hybridizers (and not coincidentally, hybridizers of new heuchera and tiarella varieties) are Terra Nova Nurseries (Oregon), The Primrose Path (Pennsylvania), and more recently Walters Gardens (Zeland, Michigan). Blooms of Bressingham (England) continues active breeding work as well, and most of the currently available heucherella varieties are the result of work by these four hybridizers.

The first commercially successful heucherella cultivar, *H. 'Bridget Bloom'*, was created by Alan Bloom, founder of Blooms of Bressingham, and named after his daughter. It was introduced in 1955, but experimentation dates back to the 1930s. Renewed interest during the 1980s resulted in the introduction of a few more heucherella cultivars, but the groundwork for our newer, perhaps more garden-worthy heucherellas was laid with the explosion of new heuchera cultivars in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Those ground-breaking heuchera hybrids

*continued on page 32*



'Dayglow Pink'

Terra Nova Nurseries

### More on intergeneric hybrids

Intergeneric hybrids are not common in the plant kingdom. In order to occur, the parents must not only be in the same plant family, in this case the Saxifragaceae, but they must have the same chromosome number and enough similarity in their DNA sequence to make cross-pollination possible. Nearly all intergeneric hybrids have occurred with the helping hand of man. The botanically correct way to write the genus name for an intergeneric hybrid is with an "x" preceding the name, as in *x Heucherella*. For simplicity's sake in this article, I have dropped the x.



'Stoplight'

Terra Nova Nurseries



Terra Nova Nurseries

'Sweet Tea'



Terra Nova Nurseries

'Alabama Sunrise'



www.PerennialResource.com

'Pink Fizz'

*continued from page 30*

included genetic material from many different heuchera species, greatly expanding the gene pool available to create new heucherella varieties. All known heucherellas are sterile, meaning that they cannot serve as parents for new heucherellas. New heucherella varieties are developed by working with heuchera and tiarella species and the lengthy list of their cultivars.

#### **How to grow heucherellas**

Heucherellas are typically sold in the shade plant department of garden centers, along with their parents, coral bells and foamflowers. In fact, these three groups can be so similar in appearance that reading tags may be the

only way to tell them apart. However, they don't behave the same way in the garden.

In general, heucherellas are more shade tolerant than the heucheras, which need some sun to develop their best foliage color. Of the three, tiarella is the most shade-tolerant. Most tiarella species are native to woodlands of North America, particularly the Pacific Northwest and high rainfall areas east of the Mississippi. Heucherellas are more moisture-requiring than many heuchera cultivars, which may have genetic drought tolerance imparted by species that grow in rock crevices in mountainous regions. Heucherellas fall somewhere in between their parents when it comes to moisture preference.

*continued on page 34*

*continued from page 32*

Heucherellas grow best in partially shaded sites, either with morning sun or filtered light throughout the day. These shallow-rooted plants prefer moist, humus-enriched soil. They will not survive in poorly drained or continuously wet soil—good drainage is essential.

Heucherellas are more disease-resistant than many of the coral bells and their hybrids, which are subject to a variety of fungal and bacterial leaf spot diseases, particularly in areas of high rainfall and humidity.

Perhaps the biggest cultural challenge to growing heucherella and its kin is an insect called the black vine weevil. The adults are grayish-black nocturnal beetles that eat notches along the leaf margins. This leaf damage serves as a warning that more serious damage is going on underground. Gardeners may notice that one of more of their plants have an off color, look unthrifty, or have stopped growing. When the foliage is tugged lightly, the plant may pull out of the ground easily, with the gardener left holding the entire top of the plant in his or her hand. A closer look will reveal white, 1/3-inch long, white grubs in the plant's crown and roots.

Unfortunately, control of this pest is difficult without the use of chemicals, and timing of application is critical in order to target



Terra Nova Nurseries

*continued on page 36*

'Tapestry'



www.P perennialResources.com

'Hopscotch'



Terra Nova Nurseries

'Gold Zebra'



www.PernoniaResources.com

'Red Rover'



Terra Nova Nurseries

'Cracked Ice'

*continued from page 34*

a vulnerable stage of the insect's life cycle. Control measures are beyond the scope of this article but many university bulletins are available online, with complete descriptions of the insect and its effective control. Left untreated, affected plants will be killed, and worse yet, black vine weevil may become established in your garden. Many types of garden plants are damaged by black vine weevil, including yews, rhododendrons, astilbes, hostas, and sedums.

**Using heucherellas in your garden**

Like coral bells, heucherellas can be used as colorful feature plants in part shade or part sun gardens. They come in nearly as wide an array of colors as their famous momma, including shades of green, silver, pewter-gray and purple, plus brighter color groups like chartreuse/yellow and earth tones encompassing orange, amber, russet, bronze and mahogany. Care should be used when siting chartreuse or yellow varieties, as they are more prone to burning with too much sun. However, sun for part of the day will intensify and improve the colors of the darker-pigmented varieties, including those in the orange/russet group. Highly colored plants

*continued on page 38*



Terra Nova Nurseries

'Solar Eclipse'

## Heucherella: Recommended cultivars

The genus *Heucherella* has very diverse genetics—a given variety may have parentage from many different species of *Heuchera* and *Tiarella*, each imparting different characteristics. Additionally, hybrid heucherellas and tiarellas, with their own complex heritage, may be used to create new cultivars of heucherella. Varieties that do well in the Pacific Northwest may or may not perform as well in an upper Midwest climate. This makes it hard to pick and choose “the best” varieties to recommend. Moreover, microclimates within each gardener’s locale can also have a big impact on success. Newer cultivars, with their more complicated lineages, may be improvements on older ones, but not necessarily in all regards. Although some of the first varieties of *Heucherella* have been superseded, gardeners know that new is not always better, and some of the older ones have remained solid performers over the years. Many stunning new varieties have not been grown long enough to have a track record. Each gardener will have to choose whether to try older, more established varieties or be adventurous and opt for newer, cutting-edge cultivars.

### COLOR GROUPS

A list of cultivars (and their breeders), arranged approximately chronologically by date of introduction within each color group.

#### Green foliage, sometimes with burgundy center or veins

- ‘Bridget Bloom’ – First heucherella commercially available (Blooms of Bressingham).
- ‘Pink Frost’ – Bicolored pink and white flowers (The Primrose Path).
- ‘Viking Ship’ – Coral-pink flowers (Terra Nova).
- ‘Dayglow Pink’ – Bright neon-pink flowers (Terra Nova).
- ‘Pink Fizz’ – Long-blooming, pink flowers; silvery green/burgundy (Walters Gardens).

#### Silver/Purple/Green foliage combinations

- ‘Quicksilver’ – Metallic silver with bronze veins; pink buds reveal white flowers (The Primrose Path).
- ‘Twilight’ – Velvety charcoal gray, maple-shaped leaves veined purple (Terra Nova).
- ‘Kimono’ – Very deeply dissected silver/green leaves with purple center (Terra Nova).
- ‘Tapestry’ – Green/purple foliage; pink flowers; heavy blooming (Terra Nova).
- ‘Cracked Ice’ – Deeply dissected, teal green with icy overlay; white flowers (Blooms of Bressingham).
- ‘Galactica’ – Star-shaped silver leaves with purplish-black veins (Walters Gardens).

#### Yellow/chartreuse foliage; burgundy or red center and/or veins

- ‘Sunspot’ – The first chartreuse heucherella; red spot in leaf center; pink flowers (Terra Nova).
- ‘Stoplight’ – Red centers and veins; white flowers; improved vigor (Terra Nova).
- ‘Alabama Sunrise’ – Innovative incorporation of *Heuchera villosa* parentage; palmate leaves (Terra Nova).
- ‘Gold Zebra’ – Deeply lobed palmate leaves with even more red throughout (Terra Nova).
- ‘Thunderbird’ – Rival to ‘Gold Zebra’; maple-shaped leaves with red centers (Walters Gardens).
- ‘Solar Eclipse’ – Round-lobed leaves; red center covers most of the leaf in cool weather (Terra Nova).
- ‘Leapfrog’ – Red spots on softly lobed chartreuse leaves (Walters Gardens).

#### Orange/ Amber/ Russet/ Bronze foliage

- ‘Burnished Bronze’ – Shiny bronze chocolate foliage; long-lived in garden (Terra Nova).
- ‘Sweet Tea’ – A breakthrough with orange and tea colors (Terra Nova).
- ‘Honey Rose’ – Amber and rose shades (Blooms of Bressingham).
- ‘Buttered Rum’ – Golden-orange, becoming rum colored (Terra Nova).
- ‘Brass Lantern’ – Large glossy palmate leaves; pronounced darker center (Terra Nova).
- ‘Pumpkin Spice’ – Orange leaves with red veins; color deepens in summer (Walters Gardens).
- ‘Hopscotch’ – Butterscotch to bronze/green, large palmate leaves (Walters Gardens).
- ‘Red Rover’ – Red to bronze/green, deeply lobed (Walters Gardens).



‘Brass Lantern’

Terra Nova Nurseries



‘Buttered Rum’

Terra Nova Nurseries

*continued from page 36*

in woodland settings often look artificial; these foliage colors aren’t found naturally in the woods. Look to the green, silver/green, or purple/green foliage colors to blend harmoniously in your woodland gardens. The delicate flowers, in shades of pink and white, add sparkle without being overpowering.

Consider the soil when planting heucherellas in your gardens. They do best with loamy, moisture-retentive soils that neither hold water excessively, nor dry out quickly. Adding

compost or other organic matter is always a good practice. Remember that good drainage is of utmost importance for their long-term well-being. Planting companions should enjoy the same conditions of partial shade and well-drained but evenly moist soil, and could include hostas, ferns, bleeding hearts, perennial forget-me-nots (*Brunnera*), toad lily, Japanese forest grass, primroses, lungwort, and hellebores.

*Karen Bovio is the owner of Specialty Growers in Howell, MI.*