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EXTRA TEXTURE

Heucheras give gardeners many choices of texture, color and hue

RAISED AND RESTORED

Ripartan projects create a market for native plants

WHERE CREDIT ISN'T DUE

Careful procedures can keep you from making costly mistakes

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Cover: Heucheras come in many beautiful varieties, but few are more striking than 'Midnight Rose,' which is the top seller at Terra Nova Nurseries, a leading Heuchera breeder based in Tigard, Ore. The plant has burnished black leaves, with numerous hot pink spots appearing in spring. In summer, the leaves lighten, with cream and pink dots appearing. Photo courtesy of Terra Nova Nurseries, Tigard, Ore. **This page:** Restoration projects – such as the Graham Oaks Natural area near Wilsonville, Ore. – are a strong market for native plants. Some 150,000 trees and shrubs were planted at the site earlier this year. Photo by Curt Kipp.



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Native plant growers find an eager market among developers and agencies working to protect native Northwest salmon runs.

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Consumers addicted to texture and color embrace a foliage revolution begun by Heuchera breeders with a flair for the fantastic.

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Robots and other forms of automation may be a solution to the ongoing problems growers experience with finding enough available labor.

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Letting customers buy on credit can be smart business, but a little due diligence can help prevent you from making mistakes that may be hazardous to your cash flow.

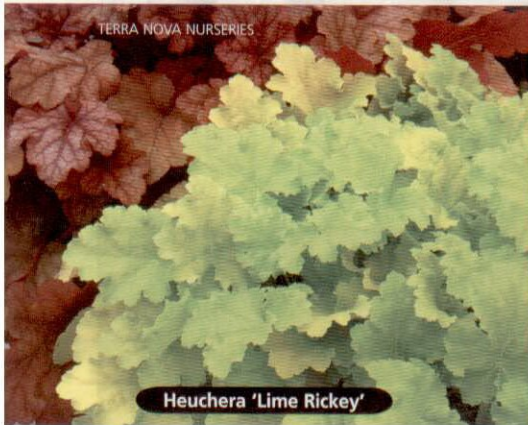
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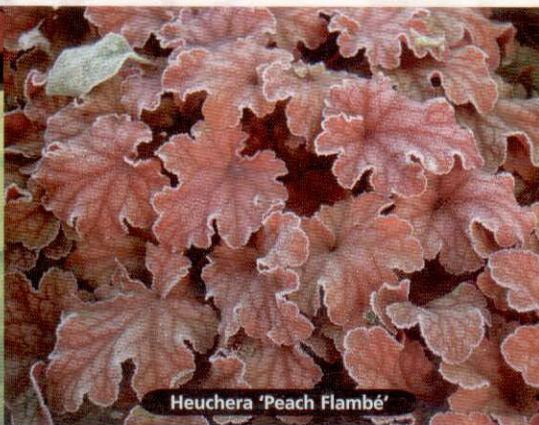
Retailers and growers thrive best by working in partnership to help each other look good and sell more plants.

20 BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

The nursery business offers abundant opportunities to live and learn, as Tree Frog Nursery owner Carson Lord will attest.



Heuchera 'Lime Rickey'



Heuchera 'Peach Flambé'



Heuchera 'Obsidian'

THE
MANY
HUES OF

Heuchera

A FOLIAGE REVOLUTION STARTED BY BREEDERS HAS BEEN EMBRACED BY CONSUMERS ADDICTED TO COLOR



This greenhouse at Terra Nova Nurseries contains Heucheras in many different colors, reflecting the grower's commitment to developing dozens of new varieties.

By Lisa Albert

Twenty-two years ago, *Heuchera villosa* 'Palace Purple' (sometimes labeled *H. micrantha* 'Palace Purple'), a chance seedling discovered at Kew Gardens, sparked a foliage revolution in American gardens.

It began quietly enough, gaining momentum when two more selections, *H. americana* 'Dale's Strain' (Hendricks, 1988) and *H. sanguinea* 'Snow Storm' (Terra Nova, 1989), hit the market.

It wasn't long before the genus exploded with foliage colors never

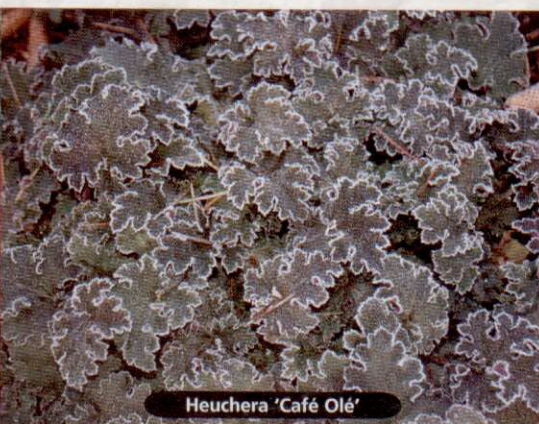
before seen, much less envisioned, thanks to the efforts of groundbreaking breeders.

"No one was really doing any work with Heuchera until Dan (Heims) and Ken (Brown) started Terra Nova Nurseries (in 1992)," company Marketing Director Dave Doolittle said. "They started out relatively simply ... producing small quantities at a tissue culture business in (Ken's) backyard.

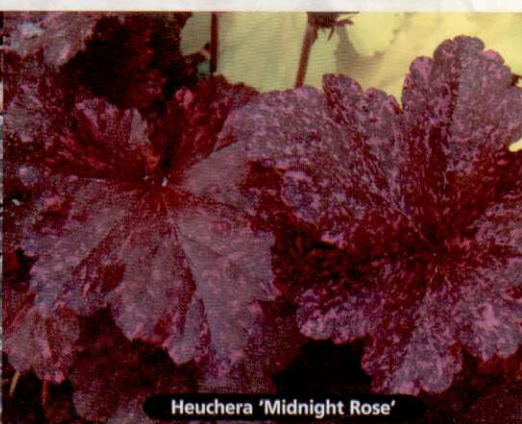
"When they started releasing the plants, people were interested because no one else was playing with the



Heuchera 'Marmalade'



Heuchera 'Café Olé'



Heuchera 'Midnight Rose'



PHOTO: TERRA NOVA

The textures and hues that Heucheras provide can be even more dazzling when placed in beds in combination with other plants for a multicolored, multilayered, multitextured effect. The Heucheras in front of this bed are interspersed with several Lamiums in front, a Tiarella farther back, some Sedums and a Penstemon plant in back of those, and in the rear, a Physocarpus and several Viburnums.

genus. The plants sold themselves and Heuchera became a mainstream crop rapidly. Today, Terra Nova produces close to 2.5 to 3 million cuttings out of our labs."

Phil Thornburg, landscape designer and owner of Winterbloom, Inc. in Tigard, Ore., said he remembers Heuchera, commonly called coral bells, "as a nice, small, compact, tough, evergreen perennial that had nice wands of tiny, red flowers" that he planted in full sun in the early '80s.

About 12 to 15 years ago, he noticed that interest shifted to Heuchera

as a foliage plant, coinciding with a garden design trend to choose plants for foliage color and interest, not just for blooms.

"The impact was amazing in the nurseries as the foliage caused them to sell like hotcakes," Thornburg said. He credited Terra Nova Nurseries and "its amazing breeding in crossing different species of Heuchera" for the "market" impact.

Heucheras have been a part of the perennial line-up at Farmington Gardens in Beaverton, Ore., since it opened in 1994, according to Brian

Schiffer, director of horticulture. However, consumer choices have multiplied many times over.

"We initially carried only a few – we had the 'purple' one and the 'green' one – but last I checked we have had at one point or another over 60 varieties in our store," Schiffer said. "Dan Heims from Terra Nova Nurseries has, in my opinion, been the mastermind behind the Heuchera evolution.

"I remember touring their nursery over a decade ago and drooling over



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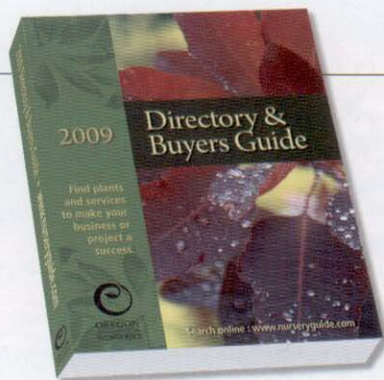
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Dave Doolittle, marketing director, and Dan Heims, company co-founder, talk about the development of different Heuchera varieties at Terra Nova Nurseries.

the new varieties that were about to go to market. Looking back at how excited I was about those early varieties, I think my head would have exploded if I had seen what we have now."

Out of the test tube, into the garden

"Heucheras were initially most important because they were one of the few perennials readily available that would grow in shade and have some color and interest," Schiffer said. "We used to be lucky to have a few flowers here and there, but the overall color was mostly foliage green or blue. (Then) 'Palace Purple' came out ... and basically helped usher in the current interest in shade gardening. 'Palace Purple' showed everyone that not everything had to be green in the shade, but I think it was the color of 'Amber Waves' (Terra Nova, 2000) that really caught the eye of designers and launched the current Heuchera market as it is now."

Today, gardeners can choose from a wealth of colorful Heucheras. "A well-designed shade garden can rival a traditional sunny garden," Schiffer said.

Carol Lindsay, landscape designer and owner of Design in a Day in Portland, Ore., relishes opportunities to play with foliage color and form.

"I've combined 'Ebony & Ivory' (Terra Nova, 1997) or 'Marmalade'

(Terra Nova, 2004) with the blue form of *Parabebe catarractae*, orange New Zealand sedge (*Carex testacea*), and *Geranium renardii*. I've also used 'Marmalade' with Phormium. They're knock-out combinations!

"Another fantastic combo is 'Midnight Rose' (Terra Nova, 2006) - flashy almost to the point of tackiness - under the skirt of red forms of *Loropetalum* (*L. chinense* var. *rubrum*, pink-flowering Chinese fringe flower). The hot pink spots of 'Midnight Rose' are the same pink as the flowers of the *Loropetalum*."

Lindsay admits fondness for old-time favorite 'Plum Pudding' (Terra Nova 1996), also a favorite of her clients. She prefers its cleaner look to the gray cast other Heucheras exhibit. "The gray tones remind me of dead things or moldy things."

New forms, however, present design opportunities.

"I always thought of them as afternoon shade plants but I am using them more in full sun," Lindsay said. "They add great texture in full sun. My clients will say 'My garden is boring,' and it's because they have too much tiny foliage. Heucheras are an easy fix, adding interest with their palmate leaf and frothy flowers."

Thornburg agreed. They offer great "contrast with grasses and fine textured foliage plants," he said. "They are available in so many foliage colors that one can find just

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the right one to pick up secondary colors in other plantings that surround it."

Heucheras are also fabulous container plants. Thornburg predicts they will continue to be a choice perennial for containers, especially useful in large containers in interesting shapes and colors.

"It's a grower's dream plant. You can produce and sell them in spring, summer, or fall, they require a minimal amount of care or input, and they have undeniable sales appeal."

— Brian Schiffer


Lindsay noted their appeal to young gardeners. "The younger generation is terrified of ending up with their mothers' perennial borders," she said. "Drifts of Heuchera are the answer. They are easy care plants that don't suck their time."

"It's a grower's dream plant," Schiffer said. "You can produce and sell them in spring, summer, or fall, they require a minimal amount of care or input, and they have undeniable sales appeal. Right now, customers look at our shade perennial section, see the multitude of colors, and fall in love."

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It isn't hard to get growers to talk about plants. The tough part is getting them to narrow down their list of favorites to just a handful. Here are some of the varieties our sources recommended:

Jeanine Standard

Advertising and Public Relations
Proven Winners, Bloomington, Ill.



'Tuscan Sun' Heliothis is a new zone 3 perennial release from Proven Winners®. This plant offers a strong compact habit plus tremendous flowering power. The rich yellow blooms contrast with the dark foliage and appear all summer long.

Supertunia® Vista

Silverberry Petunia is the third Vista variety, Proven Winners® line of petunias that is perfect for the landscape. Each is bred to flower earlier, grower taller and spread wider. Silverberry takes on a blush pink hue in cooler temperatures and is more silvery white in the heat. Each plant will reach 24" in height and has been known to spread up to 4 feet.



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Leucanthemum offers exciting lemon yellow flowers that lighten to a soft butter shade, then turn white as they mature. This Shasta daisy is a profuse bloomer that is sturdy, reliable and easy to grow. A perennial in zones 5-11.



Senorita Rosalita® Cleome

offers dark green foliage that creates a dramatic backdrop for vivid pink blooms. It is a vigorous grower with a strong upright habit and flowers from the ground up, overgrowing old flower spikes. It will reach up to 48" in height making it a perfect backdrop for smaller annuals.



Pink Chablis® Lamium

provides plenty of color and texture in areas of shade and sun. Apple green leaves with a dense silver overlay provide a stunning backdrop for the puffy, soft pink blooms. This plant is a perennial in zones 4-11, and will reach a height of 6-10".



Dave Doolittle

Director of Marketing
Terra Nova Nurseries, Canby, Ore.

Echinacea 'Tiki Torch'

PP18839 PVR — Darkest orange coneflower to date with massive 4 1/2" flowers. Retains intense color for weeks rather than days. Spicy-scented blooms sit atop strong upright 36" stems. Use for the border and as cut flowers.



Heuchera 'Georgia Peach'

PPAF PVR — Huge peach colored leaves with a very showy white overlay and a large lush habit. This plant makes a Hosta-like bold foliage statement, except, of course, it's evergreen. Foliage color changes from peach-orange tones in the spring to rose to rose purple in the fall through winter, and always with a decorative white veil. From *H. villosa*



breeding so will grow well in southern humidity or in the Northwest. Creamy white flowers.

Heuchera 'Southern Comfort' PPAF PVR

— 'Huge cinnamon-peach leaves and a lush habit. This plant makes a bold foliage statement. Creamy white flowers erupt in late summer. Foliage color changes from cinnamon peach to burnished copper to amber. Bred to do well in Southern humidity, the Midwest, the Northeast or in the Northwest.



Tiarella

'Mystic Mist' PPAF PVR

— Bred for vigor, this new beautiful Tiarella is variegated and colorful. 'Mystic Mist' has bright green leaves with white speckled variegation and prominent red veins all year. Blooms in spring are white foam flowers. Fall color has



striking pink tones. Fast growing clumping habit. Needs good drainage.

Campanula 'Pink Octopus'

PP18885 PVR — Japanese lantern buds open to striking pink octopus-like flowers. These weep down from the upright flowering branches above strong, deeply cut foliage. Long bloom time. Easy to grow. Tolerant of most soils.



According to Jeanine Standard, advertising and public relations coordinator for Proven Winners®, the popularity of Heucheras is well-deserved.

"They are good for most situations, many take full sun (except in the southern states); all have good color and are good fillers. They are hardy (Zone 4) and easy to grow," she said. "We see more widespread use of Heucheras in the landscape and especially in containers. I like to use them in mixed situations to show off the varieties of colors and textures."

Proven Winners introduced the Dolce® line of Heucheras in 2004-2005, adding 'Dolce® Blackcurrant' (Darwin Plants, 2007) two years ago for a total of seven Heucheras.

"Color varieties range from 'Dolce® Licorice' (Terra Nova, 2005) to 'Dolce® Key Lime Pie' (Terra Nova, 2005) to 'Dolce® Peach Melba' (Terra Nova, 2004)," Standard said. "As temperatures change, the coloration changes, becoming more vibrant in cooler weather."

Almost perfect pitch

Despite their many attributes, Heucheras aren't flawless.

"Heucheras are beloved by strawberry root weevils and their larvae," Thornburg said. "They can decimate a whole planting in the ground or rarely in a container as well."

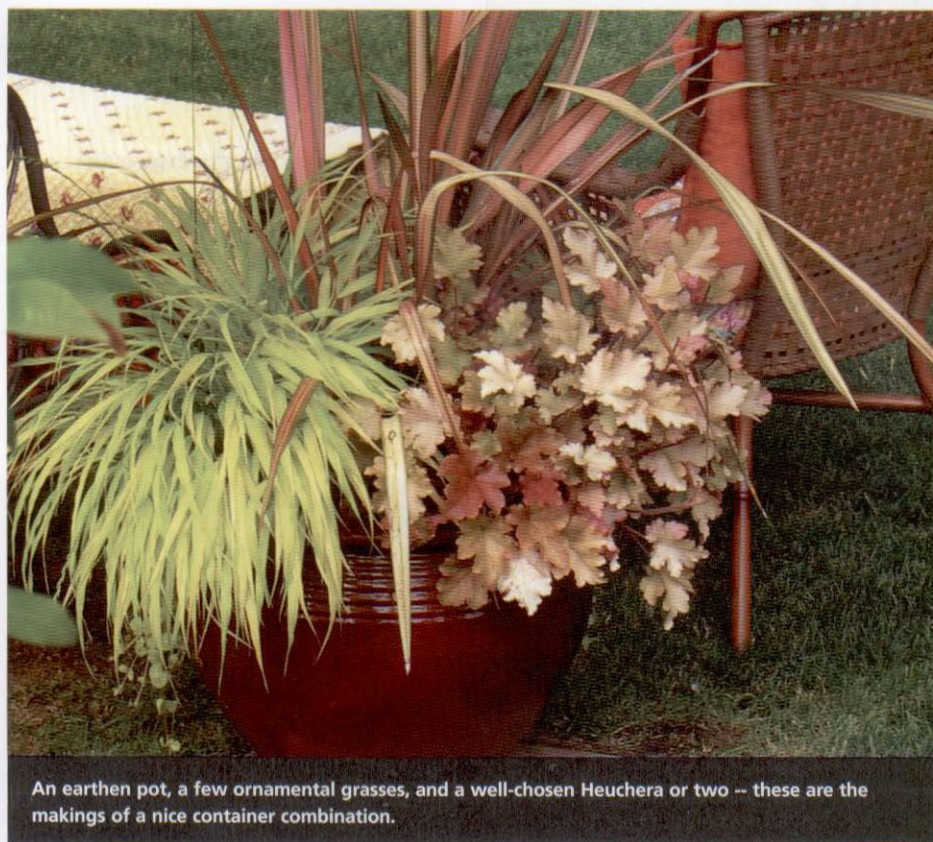
Schiffer added, "We luckily don't see them much in the newer cultivars, but some of the older varieties ... would be absolutely decimated by them in the landscape."

Sun tolerance is another challenge.

"As a designer, I need to know which ones are sun tolerant – really sun tolerant," Lindsay said. "I've tried the ones that are supposed to be but they often end up with leaf scorch. I do good soil prep, using Joy Creek's soil recipe, so that they have good drainage in winter and water doesn't run off in summer as it does with basic clay soil.

"This recipe seems to be the ticket and helps sun tolerant forms to really

HEUCHERA



An earthen pot, a few ornamental grasses, and a well-chosen Heuchera or two -- these are the makings of a nice container combination.

TERRA NOVA NURSERIES

be sun tolerant. I still have problems with some of them; (however), 'Obsidian' will take sun like nobody's business."

Doolittle's rule of thumb backs up Lindsay's observation: "The darker the foliage, the more sun tolerant. 'Obsidian' (Terra Nova, 2002) – the best black around – and 'Midnight Rose' are very sun tolerant," Doolittle said. "Lime Rickey' (Terra Nova, 2004), a great chartreuse Heuchera with distinctive white flowers, is sensitive to sun scorch. Chartreuse-leaved plants perform best in filtered shade."

Additionally, Doolittle advised against time-released fertilizers.

"The plants need to rest in the winter and a fertilizer release can scar the roots," he said. "We recommend any organic fertilizer (but) the beauty of these plants is that they do not require heavy feeds. They do best when they aren't pampered. They need sufficient moisture to get established but then they are drought-tolerant."

Ringing in the future

"We are seeing an increase in demand (for drought tolerance) from all areas but especially from California, where we have a facility, and from

gardeners in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina where they've had such drought issues recently," Standard said. "But it's a request from all regions as gardeners yearn to use natural resources wisely. We're trying to be smart in our industry by reducing costs and water usage but we also want to be part of sustainability movement."

To meet the growing demand, Proven Winners is working to produce more drought-tolerant plants.

Terra Nova Nurseries continues to breed hybrids with the best qualities of the species.

"We're breeding for leaf size (using villosa blood to give these forms their leaf size and soft velvety texture. The leaves of 'Southern Comfort' (Terra Nova, 2008) are so huge that this is the first catalog I've ever used a ruler in the photo to show their actual size: eight inches!"

Villosa parentage also increases a hybrid's heat and humidity tolerance. *H. americana* often imbues hybrids, such as 'Mahogany' (Terra Nova, 2007) and 'Peach Flambé' (Terra Nova, 2004),



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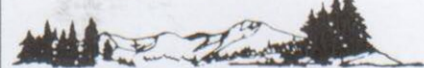
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Heuchera 'Sashay'

Terra Nova's award winners

In 2001, the Royal Horticultural Society in London, England awarded fifteen Awards of Garden Merit to Heuchera and Heucherella hybrids. Eight of the heucheras were developed at Terra Nova Nurseries:

- 'Burgundy Frost' (1993),
- 'Can Can' (1996),
- 'Chocolate Veil' (1994),
- 'Magic Wand' (1997),
- 'Purple Petticoats',
- 'Fireworks' (1998),
- 'Sashay' (1998) and 'Smokey Rose' (1997).

Terra Nova's Heucherella 'Kimono' also received an AGM from RHS in 2001. In 2002, the RHS awarded the Reginald Cory Cup to Heims for his achievement in Heuchera breeding.

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Heucheras perform well in all conditions because we use diverse number of species in our breeding efforts."

Developing these new forms takes time and money. Breeders develop and test plants as long as five years before being released to the market, according to Standard. Proven Winners works with breeders, buying plant patents and taking steps to protect their investment.

"We have people who visit nurseries looking for patent violations," Standard said.

Back by popular demand

Foliage is hot but flowers are still in fashion, as evidenced by the popularity of 'Rave On' (Terra Nova, 2005).

"It's the most floriferous on the market," Doolittle said. "We sent it (for testing) to University of Georgia to Allan Armitage. It's one of his favorites."

"We're looking at flowers more, selecting for color, season of bloom, length of bloom, and sturdy stems," Doolittle said. "The market can expect to see never before seen flower and foliage colors to hit the market in 2010 and subsequent years."

He wouldn't reveal any hints but he did offer a glimmer of hope.

"Our only expected release for 2009 is 'Plum Royale', a distinctly purple year-round, vigorous grower that doesn't turn silver in the sun like 'Plum Pudding'," Doolittle said. "(However) it's potentially possible we might release other new forms in late 2009."

"I have said many times that I'm sick of new Heucheras, but secretly I can't wait to see what they develop next," Schiffer said.

Viva la Revolution! ©

Lisa Albert is a freelance garden writer based in Tualatin, Ore. Her work has been featured in Sunset magazine. Contact her at lja.garden@verizon.net or visit her Web site at www.lisaalbert-writer.com.

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