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GARDEN OF MAGICAL COLOR

Plant breeder, Terra Nova Nurseries, creates a display garden to inspire visitors

BY LESLIE KIRK & DON EBERLY

In May 2004, Terra Nova Nurseries, a national plant breeder propagator, began transforming its trial and collectors' garden into a display garden for wholesale customers and others to experience the diverse results of the nurseries' cultivation.

The garden's emphasis is new and unusual herbaceous perennials with robust and colorful foliage, variegation and blooms. Located in Canby, Oregon, it is full of magical color for at least nine months of the year and includes many of the newest, most popular plants on the market. The Terra Nova Nurseries team produces hardy new plant varieties each year through expert breeding and labora-

tory research. These varieties are then propagated by means of culture in state-of-the-art labs to make large quantities of standardized plants available to home gardeners, independent garden centers, growers and landscape professionals throughout the world.

As varieties change, the garden is updated with new plants while retired varieties are removed. Thus, the display garden has become known for its rebirthing of plant material and is always an interesting destination to tour and photograph.

Plant breeders are always striving to not only make pretty new varieties, but to make sure they perform better than old ones.



ABOVE: **PATHWAY PLANTS**
On either side of the path is a collection of perennials, including *Heuchera* 'Obsidian,' *Lobelia* 'Grape Knee-Hi' and the *Echinacea* 'Heavenly Dream,' 'Merlot' and 'Ruby Giant'.

SEE NEW PERENNIALS IN THE MAKING

To give homeowners an idea of what plants go through before they get to their yard, we asked Chuck Pavlich, director of new product development for Terra Nova Nurseries, to explain how the display trial garden there works. He also offered a few easy-care landscape tips that home gardeners can apply to their own situations:

What can you see in the company's display beds?

✱ "The trial garden is maintained with all new plants included in our product catalog for the new growing year. Some older plants are kept for historical reasons, and others are relegated to a historical garden or given to public gardens, like the International Rose Test Garden in Portland or The Oregon Garden, to enhance their collections."

What are the best lessons to be learned from your display garden?

✱ "Something we frequently learn from the display garden is 'never say never.' *Hakonechloa* (Japanese Forest Grass) has been rated for use in USDA Zone 9, a quite warm region, but I've seen it perfectly happy in Wisconsin! Planting in unexpected areas of the garden is also a good tip. Rules were meant to be broken and rewritten. Just like us, trying new things is how

home gardeners will discover what works and what doesn't. I love the 'what if we... moments.' We enjoy a challenge and highly encourage home gardeners to try something new, spice it up a bit, and see what happens."

How do you judge a plant's success?

✱ "Each is subjected to a 'real world' situation. Canby, Oregon, soil is naturally heavy and less than ideal, which is a situation similar to what many homeowners face. While we're often very successful with these plants due to extensive testing during research and development, display garden managers and maintenance workers make careful observations for disease and insect problems, lack of vigor or true-to-type issues. We're extremely passionate about our plants, and all merits and problems are vigorously discussed in order to come to a consensus on whether to proceed or withdraw a plant."



FLOWER & FOLIAGE
Foliage holds its own against flower in this richly toned border that includes *Heucherella* 'Burnished Bronze,' *Heuchera* 'Amber Waves,' *Pulmonaria* 'Excalibur,' *Geum* 'Fireball' and *Corydalis* 'Berry Exciting'



BRIGHT TAPESTRY
This triangular bed is filled with *Pulmonaria* 'Excalibur,' *Heucherella* 'Tapestry,' and *Heuchera* 'Purple Petticoats' and 'Peach Flambe,' along with ornamental grasses, spireas and tropical-flavor plants like canna and *Musa basjoo*.