

# Beyond

by Don Eberly

Every year thousands of new plant varieties are released by breeders to the horticulture industry. Some are improvements upon older varieties; others are new and updated series or varieties that compete with existing brands' products; still others nobly attempt to solve growers' production problems. Then there are the standouts – the varieties that stop trade-showgoers in their tracks, turn heads, and, sometimes, drop jaws.

It is attention-grabbing to find these varieties among the hundreds of new colours and selections out there. To the point, in recent years, plant breeders and growers have stepped up their efforts to make such great plants available, for consumers' enjoyment and for growers' benefit.

"We, as growers, must put out premium plant selections each year, and the task is getting more interesting as energy prices increase and consumers have to decide where to spend and where to save," said Linda Guy, new plant product development director for Novalis Plants that Work and Plants that Work By Color. "With consumers sticking a little closer to home, we want to make the most unique and beautiful plants available to them and make their environments more

special, but in a way that is low-maintenance and enjoyable. Likewise, we want to help growers continue to make a profit. Introducing superior genetics that save on input costs is one way to make that happen."

As attention turns toward developing more sustainable options in the horticultural world, and consumers become more aware of their own carbon footprints and those of the products they buy, more plants are available that cater to this concern.

"Many of today's new varieties are bred for disease resistance to reduce homeowners' use of harmful and often confusing pesticides," said Dan Heims, president and co-owner of Oregon-based Terra Nova Nurseries. "Heat and humidity tolerance also reduces wasteful watering, which is all too important today, when concern for our resources is high and restrictions are common."

Plant experts like these develop plants that accommodate the need for unique, striking new varieties that capture consumers' attention, while offering proven tolerance for pest pressures and weather extremes. In addition to plant recommendations from their companies, here are several other notables for 2009.

## ***Nemesia Bedazzle Topaz***

*Nemesia* 'Bedazzle Topaz' (photo on facing page), part of the Novalis Plants that Work by Color collection, covers itself with delicate, baby pink flowers that feature bright orange lips and primrose-yellow flags. Originally from the Cape of South Africa, Topaz is bushy and neat in habit. "Topaz blooms throughout the summer season, and flowering will slow down in extreme heat, but blooms bounce back once the weather cools down," Guy said. "It is an excellent winter variety in warm climates." Topaz thrives in full sun and reaches 10 inches tall with an 18-inch spread. It is hardy to USDA Zone 11 and

is best suited for containers. Fertilize Bedazzle nemesia twice monthly. There are hundreds of striking varieties of robust colour choices like this from Novalis Plants that Work by Color.

## ***Osteospermum Oops-A-Daisy Dreamsicle***

*Osteospermum* Oops-A-Daisy 'Dreamsicle' is an amazing, interspecific hybrid annual that flowers much longer in full sun than other African daisies. Part of the Novalis Plants that Work by Color collection, the plants bloom vigorously in bright



orange with a contrasting dark eye that really grabs attention and looks phenomenal in mixed containers. Dreamsicle is hardy to USDA Zone 11 and reaches 12 inches tall and spreads 16 inches. It should be fertilized regularly and trimmed back in the heat of summer to revive the plants for late summer and fall blooming.

## ***Bletilla ochracea 'Chinese Butterfly'***

With few plants in the orchid family suited to the outdoor garden, *Bletilla ochracea* 'Chinese Butterfly' offers exciting possibilities. Exclusive to the Novalis Plants that Work collection for 2009, 'Chinese Butterfly' features creamy-yellow flowers, accented by a dotted, maroon lip. In the spring, these flowers are poised on delicate wands, blooming well into summer. "This variety is an exquisite shade perennial,"

plants. 'Kaleidoscope' is a double stem variety, which offers added value for gardeners, with the perception of getting two plants for the price of one. As a double stem variety, 'Kaleidoscope' offers a higher bud count and lives longer. When



a plant yields a double spike, it means it is a stronger plant with enough energy and nutrients to sustain two spikes. It will bloom with a minimum of 12 flowers. Its rare colouring, with variations of peach, yellow and pink, makes 'Kaleidoscope' a novelty offering. One of the strongest varieties in the *Phalaenopsis* family, it withstands shipping well, without dropping buds. In full bloom stage, 'Kaleidoscope' will last for two to three months in the right conditions. Keep plants out of direct sun and water once per week, when the media is dry.

### ***Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Petite'**

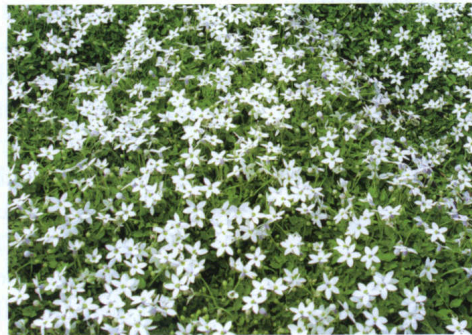
Few plants are as adorable and charming as *Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Petite.' This drought-tolerant Stepables perennial features light gray foliage that fits snugly on the ground and covers completely, wherever it goes. Tiny, charming pink flowers bloom on short spikes in early summer. *Dianthus* 'Petite' fills in perfectly around taller perennials, between pavers or as a



lawn substitute. It should be planted in soil or in gravel, but needs sharp drainage to be content. It is hardy to USDA Zone 4 and reaches only one-inch in height. Plants should be spaced six inches apart in full to part sun for best results.

### ***Pratia pendunculata* 'Alba,'**

Small brilliant green leaves weave a super-tight mat on top of the ground and underneath, making *Pratia pendunculata* 'Alba,' also known as Super Star Creeper, a superb lawn substitute. Bright white, tiny flowers completely encompass this amazing Stepables creeper in late spring. 'Alba' should be planted between stones, over flower bulbs and around roses. It works great as a bark/mulch substitute around shrubs. Hardy to USDA Zone 6b, it thrives



in full to part sun, reaches three inches in height and, as a vigorous grower, should be spaced eight inches apart.

### **'Tomato Soup'**

"As the first tomato-red Echinacea on the market, we fully expect 'Tomato Soup'



to be a top seller of 2009," said Terra Nova Nurseries' Dan Heims. "The plant features stunning, five-inch, tomato-red flowers that bloom in stark contrast with a deep black eye." A well-branched perennial, 'Tomato Soup' will reach up to three feet tall and nearly as wide at maturity, showing excellent vigor until frost. Hardy to USDA Zones 4-9, 'Tomato Soup' has a clumping, upright

habit that makes it easy to grow in full sun with good drainage. Blooming is prolonged by deadheading. In the greenhouse, it should be kept moderately dry between waterings; a crop of four-inch plants can be ready in six to eight weeks.

### ***Heuchera* 'Plum Royale'**

A plant with intrigue all year long, Terra Nova Nurseries' heuchera 'Plum Royale' is the first heuchera on the market to have amazing, shiny purple leaves all summer. Winter foliage sparkles silver with a purple tint. "This vigorous coral bells selection is wonderful as an accent or planted en masse, with dainty pink-white flowers dancing above the lovely foliage on dark spikes," said Heims. With a mounding habit, the plant reaches eight inches tall with flowers stretching to 12 inches, and a 14-inch spread. 'Plum Royale' is hardy to USDA Zones 4-9 and requires part shade and moist, well-drained media that is low



in peat. It should be kept dry between waterings. A crop of four-inch plants can be ready in four weeks.

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