

A few of my favourites

BY DAVID VAN DE VEN

Here are a few selections that don't necessarily fall into categories that I have previously written about — or I just didn't have room for! Trying to choose just a few plants to inform the industry about is difficult. There are many under-used perennials that are most certainly worthy of use in the professional landscape. Yes, some are vigorous and some slow to establish, but all should be considered for placement in the correct location. Planting any perennial (or tree or shrub for that matter) should be carefully considered in any planting plan; installing a plant that will not perform in a particular location will not improve the professional reputation of any company. Be sure to plant aggressive growers in areas where they will be contained. Plant slower growers where their slow development will be noticed and appreciated. Many of the

slower-growing perennials are worth the wait, and will develop into a focal point for many years to come.

If you, as a professional, want to improve your plant list and have doubts about selections, just take time to visit your favourite plant supplier. Someone on staff will be sure to point out his favourites, or an interesting new introduction. Sometimes the newest introductions can be in shorter supply when first released, but do not be discouraged; many of these new hybrids need to be proven in our Canadian climate. Listed hardiness ratings can sometimes be inaccurate at first, and as a professional, you need to be sure of the performance of any plant in your design. Give these plants a chance to prove themselves before adding them to your plant list.

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David Van de Ven is a perennial grower in Mount Albert, Ont.

Campanula 'Summertime Blues'

Bellflower



Photo from Terra Nova Nurseries

Taller bellflowers (60 cm) are a great example of a group of plants that have gained a bad reputation for aggressive nature. *Campanula* 'Summertime Blues' is a much better behaved selection, although it is a hybrid of *C. punctata*. Clumps develop quite quickly, and beautiful blue flowers all summer make this a great choice for any garden. I have it planted in several locations in our zone 4b-5a garden, and it is performing spectacularly — and most importantly, keeping itself in a tidy clump. However, this plant rarely looks its best in any pot;

it always appears to be floppy. When planted in the garden this trait disappears. If you are looking for something similar, but slightly hardier, try *Campanula* 'Pantaloons' (zone 4) or *Campanula* 'Cherry Bells' (zone 3). Both are pink and much more vigorous growers, but plant and flower form are very similar to *Campanula* 'Summertime Blues'. I suggest any of these taller flowering *Campanulas* be planted in large groups, or even in large mass plantings.



Photo from Walters Gardens

this plant in the landscape. Unfortunately, since it is only hardy to zone five, its use across the country may be limited -- but for those of you able to plant it, give it a try. This selection is certainly a ground cover, growing to 25 cm. Plant it in large groupings. Leadwort is not aggressive, but very useful to fill in areas of the garden.

Hosta seiboldiana 'Northern Halo'

Hosta 'Northern Halo'



Photo from Van Noort Bulb Company

Hosta 'Northern Halo' (65 cm, 180 cm spread) is not a new introduction by any means, but a variation of *Hosta seiboldiana* 'Elegans' released in the mid-1980s. Like its parent plant, *Hosta* 'Northern Halo' emerges with huge leaves — the big difference is the creamy white margin that surrounds the blue-green interior. This variety, like most of

Hosta seiboldiana types, has great slug resistance due to its heavily corrugated foliage. Fantastic white flowers emerge in late summer. *Hostas* are typically very hardy, and this variety is tough enough to handle zone 2! Plant this *Hosta* as a specimen towards the back of the garden or in small groups for maximum effect. Like all of the *H. seiboldiana* types, *Hosta* 'Northern Halo' will take some time to mature, but is certainly worth the wait. Keep it planted in part shade with reasonable amounts of water (nothing too excessive!). A very under-used *Hosta*, most likely due to lack of availability, this great plant has been overlooked by many nurseries. Definitely worth a try for the professional landscape.

Ceratostigma plumbaginoides

Leadwort

Leadwort can be a good substitution for *Vinca minor* in certain plantings. *Ceratostigma* requires sun to part shade for optimum growth, so heavy shade areas are not for this plant. *Ceratostigma* foliage is a fantastic green from spring until late summer, turning a brilliant red before winter. Stunning blue flowers normally begin to emerge later in August, adding to the list of reasons to use