

THE GARDEN

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A YEAR IN ROSES
CHERRIES OLD AND NEW



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New plants aplenty

Daylilies, iris and *Heuchera* are among the fastest-growing plant groups, according to the newly published *RHS Plant Finder 2010–2011*, which lists thousands of new plants for the first time.

Of the 70,000 entries, some 3,400 are new. They include about 400 daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), 200 iris, 35 new *Acer palmatum* cultivars and more than 30 newly-released *Heuchera*. Long relied on as the plant-lover's bible, the *RHS Plant Finder* also acts as a barometer for horticultural and gardening trends.

Hot favourites

Intensive breeding programmes in the United States of America and elsewhere have a major impact on the plants we buy – the expanding number of daylilies and North American native *Heuchera* are two examples.

'What's interesting about heuchera is that one new cultivar, 'Berry Smoothie', has 29 nurseries supplying it right from the start,' said Janet Cubey, Editor-in-Chief of *RHS Plant Finder*. 'We've never seen this before.'

'It's the flavour of the month: many growers offer heucheras because they're so popular at the moment,' said Vicky Fox, of *Heuchera* specialist Plantagogo, Cheshire. 'Breeders have developed such a wide range of colours, there's a plant for every garden position.'

Her nursery holds the National Plant Collection of *Heuchera* and this year stocks 25 new cultivars, 13 of them offered by other nurseries. Vicky thinks that plant collectors' thirst for anything new is helping drive the market, and suggests that new cultivars on offer are always popular when first introduced.

Daylily mania?

Michael Loftus, owner of daylily specialists Wooten Plants, Suffolk, is one of three nurseries behind the 400-plus new cultivars of *Hemerocallis*. He believes the sheer



Bred in the US by Terra Nova Nurseries, *Heuchera* 'Berry Smoothie' is one of many new cultivars coming to the UK

number of cultivars now available is more than the market can sustain, so is following the trend in *Hemerocallis* breeding away from large, showy flowers towards lighter, more delicate 'spider' and 'unusual' forms.

Work in the US has produced dainty flowers said to harmonise well with other garden plants. Many of Michael's new introductions, such as *H.* 'For the Good Times', with its louché dusty-pink petals and golden heart, and *H.* 'Shuffle the Deck' (an 'unusual' with burgundy petals twisting around a greenish centre) reflect this trend.

Orchids and grasses

Wider movements such as the current interest in wildlife gardening are also reflected. Jeff Hutchings of Laneside Hardy Orchids, Lancashire, has introduced five of the 19 new hardy orchids listed this year. He believes the number of people converting areas of lawn into meadow is creating a demand. Most hardy orchids Jeff sells to gardeners are all species or subspecies of British natives such as *Dactylorhiza incarnata* subsp. *incarnata*, but there is also growing interest in new garden-worthy hybrids (see May, pp342–347).

'*Cypripedium* species often require specific and demanding conditions,' says Tony Dickerson of Westonbirt Plants, Surrey. 'But new hybrids from China, the US and Europe have hybrid vigour and are far more amenable to general cultivation.'

New hybrids such as *C.* 'Sunny', from Laneside, and *C.* Irene gx, one of 10 new plants from Westonbirt, are generating interest for their large, showy flowers.

Plant Finder traces dips in fashion too. This year sees just a handful of new grasses for example, in marked contrast to the surge of new cultivars in the 1990s. Neil Lucas of Knoll Gardens, Dorset has three new grasses, but believes that from their early beginnings grasses have now settled down and found their place in gardens.

i *RHS Plant Finder 2010–2011*
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Hemerocallis
'Shuffle the Deck'
– new in this
year's *RHS Plant
Finder 2010–2011*



MICHAEL LOFTUS