

STATE-TO-STATE
GARDENING

WISCONSIN GARDENING

WISCONSIN'S OWN GUIDE TO GREAT GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

Plants to add
*Year-Round
Interest*

The Hottest
Plants for 2012

January/February 2012

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**PRUNING: THE
WHEN AND WHY**



Flutterby Grande™ Peach
Cobbler Nectar bush

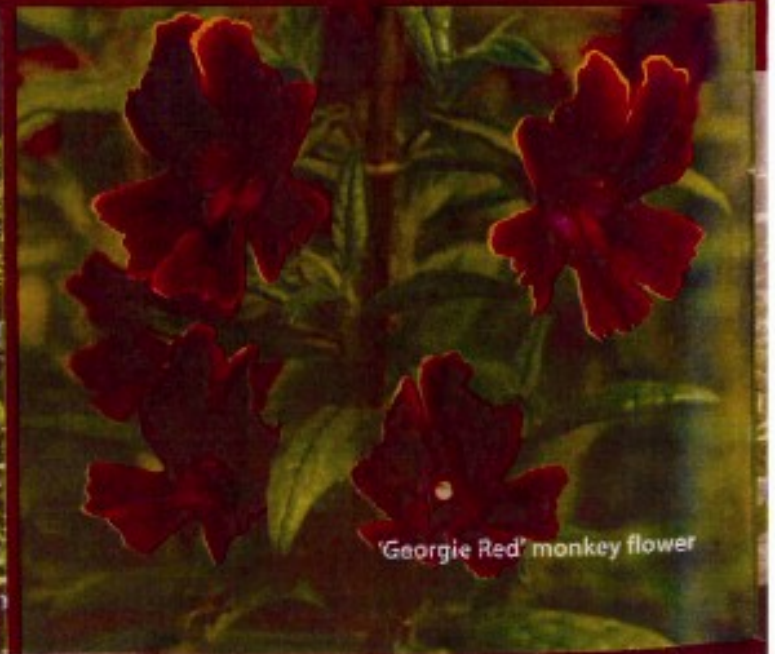
The **HOTTEST** **PLANTS** for **2012**



Little Rascal® improved holly



Bountiful Blue™ blueberry



'Georgie Red' monkey flower



By Maria Zampini



'Blonde Ambition' blue grama grass

If you're passionate about cars, you attend the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, where you "See the cars today that the rest of the world will be talking about tomorrow." To view upcoming trends in the clothing by American fashion designers, you make an appearance at the Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week at Bryant Park in New York City. One of the best places to discover new plants is the New Varieties Showcase at the Farwest Show in Portland, Ore. It is a wholesale-only trade show where green industry professionals like myself gather to see first-hand the plant stars ready to rock the U.S. I'm pleased to share with you a few of the new introductions that stood out and will be available soon through your local growers, landscapers and retailers.

"Best in Show" went to Flutterby Grande™ Peach Cobbler Nectar Bush (*Buddleia* x 'Podaras #5' PPAF). It grows 4 to 6 feet tall and wide with bright pink, full-sized (14 to 16 inches long) inflorescences. The fragrant and prolific flowers mature to a peach-pink blend, blooming from early summer to frost on silvery-colored foliage. It is hardy to Zone 5.

The Flutterby™ series are distinctively unique in two ways. First of all, and perhaps most importantly, the series are sterile, which means you do not have to worry about them becoming invasive. Secondly, this *Buddleia* series actually contains four groups that accommodate any size landscape or container; Flow™ are short and spreading like a ground cover; Petite™ are dwarf and upright; Flutterby™ are compact and upright; and Grande™ are full sized.

Street Keeper® honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Draves' PP 21,698) was named "Best Tree." Honeylocust are known as good urban-tolerant trees, but this cultivar gives you a tight narrow form that is about half as wide as other cultivars. It is hardy to Zone 4 and matures to around 45 feet in height by 20 feet in width. Its foliage is deep green, turning yellow in the fall. The mother tree is practically seedless.

Little Rascal® improved holly (*Ilex* x *meserveae* 'Monnieves' PAF) was chosen "Best Shrub." It is a slow-growing, upright, compact holly reaching just 4 feet in height, making it great for today's smaller foundation plantings or containers. Additionally, its dark, spiny evergreen foliage matures to a burgundy red in the autumn, it is hardy to Zone 5, and what I like most is that it is deer resistant.

"Best Perennial or Grass" at the show was 'Blonde Ambition' blue grama grass (*Bouteloua gracilis* 'Blonde Ambition' PAF). This is so unlike most grasses you know! Big, showy chartreuse flowers are suspended horizontally on 2½- to 3-foot stems and eventually mature to long-lasting blonde seed heads. This fast grower produces neat 18- to 24-inch high by 10- to 12-inch wide blue-green clumps. It prefers full sun, well-drained soils and is hardy to Zone 4. This drought-tolerant variety is perfect for xeriscaping. It can be used in a mixed border, mass plantings, rock gardens or containers.

Bountiful Blue™ blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum* 'FLX-2' PAF) gobbled up the "Best Edible" category. Because of its ornamental qualities you can incorporate it right into the landscape versus placing it in the "garden." It has pink to purple-blue new growth, white flowers, bluish summer foliage which turns purple in the fall. Of course berry set will be more abundant if planted with another blueberry and it prefers acidic soil. It will get approximately 3 to 4 feet tall and wide and is hardy to Zone 6.

'Georgie Red' monkey flower (*Minulus aurantiacus* 'Georgie Red' PAF) was voted "Best Annual or Tender Perennial." It features large, deep-red blooms with an orange edge that flowers from April through the fall. It will get 24 to 36 inches tall and 18 to 36 inches wide. It too is drought tolerant and needs minimal water. It will also attract hummingbirds and butterflies to your yard.

Itoh Peony

A few other show-stopping plants hardy in Zones 5 and 6 included Misaka™ Itoh peony (*Paeonia* x 'Smith Opus 1' PAF). The name translates to "beautiful blossom." It boasts 8-inch, mildly fragrant flowers that are a rare orange-amber upon opening before fading to a peachy-yellow with prominent dark-red central flares.

A hybrid between an herbaceous and a tree peony, Itoh peonies were first bred by Tioichi Itoh in the 1940s. They were slow to multiply and far too expensive to bring to market, so they weren't widely known to the gardening public. In 2004, they were successfully reproduced via tissue culture and introduced by Monrovia Growers. They are hardy to Zone 4.

In fact, in 2010 Keiko™ (Adored) peony took the "Best in Show" honor. It has large, clear pink, semi-double to double flowers with mounding, dark green foliage approximately 24 to 30 inches tall. 'Bartzella', which was an absolute smoker in the 2009 showcase, has large, 6- to 8-inch double yellow flowers with a spicy scent and can have up to 50 blooms in a single season.

Bellflowers

I'm fond of bellflowers so *Campanula* 'Viking' PP 21,021 immediately caught my eye — especially since it does not spread by rhizomes (like its parent) and the seeds are sterile so it is non-invasive. It is short and compact reaching 18 inches high and creating a 2-foot-wide clump. It has large lavender, tubular, bell shaped flowers, which are lightly fragrant. They attract butterflies and hummingbirds and also make good cut flowers. Plant 'Viking' in a sunny location in moist, well-drained soils.

Weeping Cherry

Weeping Extraordinaire™ (*Prunus* 'Extrazam') is a weeping cherry with large, double, light-pink blooms set off by glossy, hunter green foliage with coppery new growth. Flowers appear full and fluffy due to their extra petal count and serration. Leaves turn burgundy in the autumn and hold on for an extended period. A vigorous tree, it will grow to 15 to 20 feet tall and wide.

Spreading Rose

I'm all about low maintenance, so I find Icy Drift® rose (*Rosa* 'Meipicdevoj' PAF) pretty appealing. Drift® roses are a cross between full-sized ground cover roses and miniatures. They inherited the best traits from each parent, creating a tough rose with a low, spreading habit and re-blooming nature. This one has pure white double blooms, which can brighten up a hillside, create a border or fill in just about any area.

Dwarf Hydrangea

Lastly, it's hard to resist Little Lime™ (*Hydrangea paniculata* 'Jane' PAF) from Proven Winners. It is a dwarf of the popular 'Limelight', growing 3 to 5 feet high but with the same lime-green flowers that turn pink and burgundy in the autumn. It will grow in sun or part shade.

For more information on the 51 new plants featured in this year's New Varieties Showcase at the Farwest Show, visit www.farwestshow.com/vnvs.

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Left: Misaka™ Itoh Peony has 8-inch diameter flowers that appear orange when first opening — rare among intersectional hybrids. Below: 'Viking' bellflower. Bottom: Weeping Extraordinaire™. Opposite page, top: Icy Drift®. Bottom: Little Lime™ hydrangea.





Top-Performing Annuals You Can't Live Without

The variety of annual choices can be overwhelming. To learn which new annuals perform well with little or no care, I rely on The Ohio State University and their Extension trial plot in Springfield, Ohio. Assistant Professor Pam Bennett and the Master Gardener Volunteers have been trialing annuals since 1998 in the Gateway Learning Gardens. Here are three of their consistent performers in the trials. For details on other great annuals, visit go.osu.edu/fieldtrials.



Top: Double Wave™ petunia. Today's spreading petunias have a consistent growth habit and fill in quickly, providing a blanket of color in beds or containers. Deadheading is not necessary and one fertilization at the time of planting and a little water keep them going during dry periods. Middle: Diamond Frost, Breathless Blush™ and 'Hip Hop' euphorbia. These are excellent border plants in beds as they develop into rounded mounds of airy white flowers. Above: Senorita Rosalita® cleome keeps her knees covered while exploding on top with large purple flowers that bloom from mid-June on.