



Pacific Brilliance oak has fantastic orange and red fall foliage.

Hottest Plants for 2014

Check out these new plants that were reviewed and voted on by green industry professionals. **By Maria Zampini**

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It is winter, and “Baby It’s Cold Outside.” Hopefully you’re inside, toasty and warm, cuddled up by the fireplace with your gardening catalogs, magazines and books, planning your spring garden and landscape projects.

No doubt you have that itch to plant something new, right? Well, a plethora of plants debuted in 2013’s New Varieties Showcase at the Farwest Trade Show in Portland, Ore. This bevy of beauties will be available soon through your local growers, landscapers, retailers and mail-order nurseries.

Voted on by green-industry professionals, **Wild Swan anemone** (*Anemone* x ‘Macane001’) was named Best in Show. Also named the Plant of the Year at the 2011 Chelsea Flower Show in England, this is one multitalented perennial. It forms dark green, clumping foliage about 18 inches tall and 24 inches wide in part shade to part sun and moist to well-drained soil. This Zone 6 plant has a long blooming season, providing color from June until frost. Prolific white flowers have a blue-violet tone to the back of the petals which are held above its leaves. You can utilize it in woodland gardens, borders, mass plantings or tucked into rock gardens where it is deer resistant.

In addition, four selections were designated as Plants of Merit, two of which are both hardy to Zone 5. The first is **Persian Spire ironwood** (*Parrotia persica* ‘JLColumnar’). Upright and columnar in habit, it is 25 feet tall and 10 feet wide at maturity, making it a perfect choice for smaller landscapes. It can be used as a narrow-growing tree, hedge or screen.

Unlike other *Parrotia*, its foliage is finer with a narrower leaf that emerges in spring with a strong purple cast that fades into a purple halo margin. Summer foliage is dark emerald green followed by an elaborate autumn color display of ever-changing yellow, orange, burgundy and red hues.

***Nyssa sylvatica* ‘Sheri’s Cloud’** is a variegated black gum, also commonly known as black tupelo. This particular cultivar was found in Arkansas and boasts striking, creamy white margins around green leaves that turn pink and orange in the fall. Utilize this Zone 5 tree as a specimen in full sun where it will

reach 40 feet tall and 20 to 25 feet wide. This one will even tolerate heavy, compacted and wet soils too.

I know there are a lot of hydrangeas on the market, and people ask, “Do we really need more?” Well, once you get a taste of **Peppermint Swirl** (*Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Dancing Angel’) there is no going back. Each floret on this reblooming mophead displays unique peppermint-candy variegation. Peppermint Swirl is 3 feet high and wide, so it is ideal for containers as well as in the mixed border or massed in the landscape. As with most hydrangeas, it prefers partial shade and moist, well-drained soil. Of course, you can acidify the soil to turn the flowers from pink to blue (which creates dark violet to blue variegation).

Other new *H. macrophylla* included Double Delights Star Gazer (‘Kompeito’), Enchantress (‘MonMar’), Endless Summer Bloomstruck (‘P11HM-11’), as well as the *H. paniculata* type called First Editions Strawberry Sundae (‘Rensun’) and an oak-leaf, First Editions Jetstream (*H. quercifolia* ‘P11H1-1’).

Little acorns grow from mighty oaks, and so I present two new oaks that are both hardy to Zone 4. If you’re looking for a slim and trim tree then **Skinny Genes** (*Quercus robur* x *alba* ‘JFS-KW2QX’) is it! Columnar and fastigate in habit, it will reach 45 feet high, but only 10 feet wide. Its glossy, dark green foliage is mildew resistant and turns a pleasing yellow in the fall. It can be planted as a street tree or as a screen and will tolerate a wide variety of soil types and moisture levels. It prefers full sun.

When you think of a pin oak you likely envision a pyramidal tree with the lower branches angling downward. Unlike the species, **Pacific Brilliance** (*Quercus palustris* ‘PWJR08’) has a more upright form, making it more appealing for tighter spaces and street-tree use (because you can easily walk or mow under it). Its new growth is pubescent, which gives it a frosted appearance in early spring. Leaves mature to a glossy green with silvery undersides and they turn orange and red in autumn. It will eventually reach 45 to 50 feet tall and 20 to 25 feet wide. It will need full sun and a moist, rich, acidic, well-drained soil.

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FAR LEFT: Wild Swan anemone makes an excellent cut flower so you can enjoy its beauty inside and out. **LEFT:** Persian Spire parrotia provides a prolonged profusion of colorful foliage in spring, summer and fall. **ABOVE:** Distinct peppermint-candy variegation make Peppermint Swirl uniquely different among the many hydrangeas.

'Trialed' New Annuals to Try

According to Pam Bennett of The Ohio State University and the Clark County Extension annuals trial plot in Springfield, Ohio, here are some garden-worthy annuals for 2014.

Sweet alyssum (*Lobularia hybrid*) cultivars have undergone some dramatic changes recently. Once known as an early spring or late-fall bloomer, this plant now has cultivars that are extremely heat tolerant and flower all summer long. The first cultivar that came out a few years ago was Snow Princess ('Inlbublupr'), with white flowers, and was very impressive in trials across the country. Recent introductions include Blushing Princess ('Inlbublupr') with purple flowers; Frosty Knight ('Inlbuprip'), white flowers and variegated green and white foliage; and White Knight ('Inlbuwikni'), more compact with white flowers. All of these except, for the last one mentioned, reach around 8 inches tall with a spread of about 2 feet. They are great for containers and as border plants in flowerbeds. While the breeding increased heat tolerance, the wonderful sweet alyssum fragrance was sacrificed.

Lantana spp. cultivars are great plants for the heat. The flower colors are bold and light up the garden with different blends of petal colors. If you find an appealing flower color, be sure to check out its mature size first. There are plants that are smaller and more compact that grow to approximately 1 foot by 1 foot, and then there are really large ones that can reach 4 feet tall and wide. These plants are vigorous growers, and once they start blooming, they last all summer, with the flowers attracting butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. They do quite well in mixed perennial borders or flowerbeds.

Summer snapdragon (*Angelonia spp.*) cultivars are fantastic plants that perform well no matter the weather; hot and dry or cold and wet. The color choices are in the cool range and include pink, white, bluish purple, purple and a mix of purple and white. The plants can be upright and vase shaped and around 2 feet tall and wide, or can be trailing, depending on the cultivar. Angelface, Archangel and Serena series are upright varieties and Carita series has a trailing growth habit. They are excellent in full sun and the snapdragon-like flowers bloom all summer without deadheading.



Sweet alyssum



Lantana



Summer snapdragon



'Piccolino' echinacea is a lean, mean, glowing pink, pom-pom-shaped flower machine producing blooms early summer until fall.



Li'l Bang coreopsis has red flowers with yellow-orange edges.



'SuperBlue' English lavender is a free-flowering perennial with rich, deep blue flower spikes.

If you're looking for some "nativars" (cultivars of native plants), then consider **Firebird dogwood** (*Cornus florida* var. *rubra* 'Fircomz') or **Squirt leucothoe** (*Leucothoe axillaris* 'Squazam'). Firebird is a variegated, red-flowering Florida dogwood that has green and white foliage with red tones throughout the entire growing season (not just in the fall). At 20-25 feet tall and wide it is an excellent landscape focal point.

Squirt leucothoe is a selected woodland native that is more compact with smaller and more narrow leaves than the species. Its rich mahogany and copper-toned new growth pops against the glossy hunter green leaves on a spreading, fountain-like plant which reaches 18-24 inches tall and 3 feet wide. It has fragrant white flowers midspring, can take sun or shade and prefers acidic soil.

Who can resist flower power color? Not me! Some perennials that tickled me green included **Li'l Bang tickseed** (*Coreopsis* 'Daybreak'). It is small at 6-10 inches high, with single red flowers with a yellow-orange edge and it does not reseed.

For echinacea aficionados there was **Sombrero Flamenco Orange** (*E.* 'Balsomenco') and '**Piccolino**'. Sombrero Flamenco Orange has bright orange-red flowers reaching about 24 inches high and 20 inches wide. 'Piccolino' is touted to be the first compact, floriferous, dwarf double coneflower on the market. Fragrant bright pink flowers grow about 8-12 inches tall and 16-22 inches wide. Its smaller stature makes it perfect for containers as well as the landscape.

Lavender lovers can have a purple feast with '**SuperBlue**' **English lavender** (*Lavandula angustifolia* 'SuperBlue') and **Phenomenal** (*Lavandula x intermedia* 'Niko'). 'SuperBlue' makes a more colorful impact in the garden compared to other English types with fuller, deep blue flowers on each floret. 'Phenomenal' is extremely heat and humidity tolerant and resists common root and foliar diseases that other lavenders succumb to. It reaches 30 inches high when in bloom and can be used in a mixed border or a container. Both lavenders require full sun. 🌸

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