

Cover Story

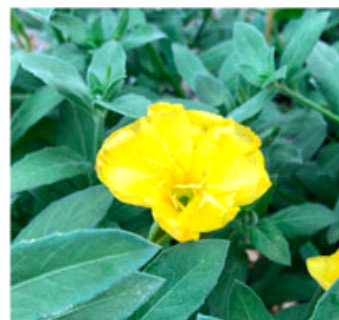
1/1/2020

Woody Ornamentals With a Purpose

Dr. Matthew Chappell

The holidays are over and many of us have now entered that long-cold winter portion of the year when we have only seed catalogs and *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* to keep us mentally sound until spring fever hits. As a result, the Ball Publishing folks asked me to report on some of the newest woody plant introductions. Here are selections from 10 branding companies and nurseries that boast new and interesting flower colors, plant habits, disease resistance, etc.

Pictured: Northern Empress Japanese Elm, Vintage Charm Abelia, Sunny Beach Primrose



Carlton Plants/Bailey Nursery & AgriForest Bio-Technologies

Northern Empress Japanese Elm (*Ulmus davidiana* var. *japonica*)

Northern Empress was released from the public breeding program of Dr. Todd West at North Dakota State University in 2019 and should be widely available in Spring 2020. It's a very hardy (Zones 3 to 6) small to medium sized (25-ft. rounded crown) elm with attractive summer and fall foliage. Fall foliage changes from green to apricot-orange to burgundy-red before leaf drop. Size and form, tolerance to higher pH and compacted soils, and limited to no seed set will permit use in smaller homeowner and business landscapes, parks and street plantings.

Gardener's Confidence

Vintage Charm Abelia (Abelia hybrid)

Vintage Charm Abelia is in the Gardener's Confidence Charming Abelias collection and reinvents a classic favorite in a more compact form with an unbelievable floral display. With more flower clusters per branch, this fragrant abelia, developed by Dr. Carol Robacker at the University of Georgia, turns into a billowing mass of white blooms in early summer, much like *Abelia chinensis* but on a more compact plant (5- to 7-ft. rounded shrub; Zones 6b to 9b).

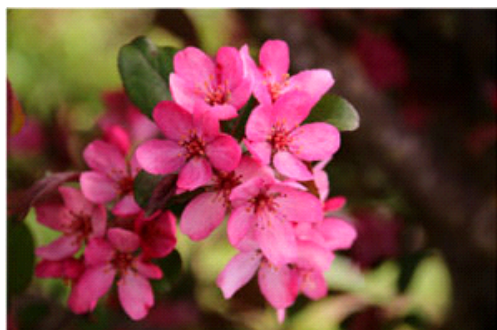
hardy). The flower display lasts over many weeks, aging from white to pink and finally a light parchment tan.

Native Texas Nursery/Texas A&M University

Sunny Beach Primrose (*Oenothera drummondii*)

As the name suggests, this low-spreading evergreen to semi-evergreen subshrub, selected by Dr. Mike Arnold at Texas A&M University, is tolerant of heat, drought and saline soil conditions. Sunny Beach matures at 1-ft. tall by 3 ft. in diameter. Bright yellow 2-in. diameter flowers (which bees love) occur from May until frost, contrasting well with rich green to slightly bluish-green foliage. Plants are hardy in Zones 8b to 13, yet it grows rapidly enough to also be used as a summer annual or as a hanging basket in regions with colder winters. Bloom is best in sunny locations and the only other requirement for success is good soil drainage.

Pictured: Ruby Dayze Crabapple, Baby Kim Lilac, Scorpio Star Flower



J. Frank Schmidt

Ruby Dayze Crabapple (*Malus* hybrid)

This new introduction earns high marks in all of the important performance categories for ornamental crabapples. Its profuse crop of bright magenta-pink flowers is a springtime showstopper that attracts pollinators. Blooms are followed by clean, highly disease resistant purple-red foliage that presents orange-red tints in autumn. Tiny, deep red fruit persists into winter. Growers and landscape managers appreciate its disease tolerance (especially scab) and its upright, tightly oval low-maintenance form.

Proven Winners

Baby Kim Lilac (*Syringa* hybrid)

This is an improved version of garden classic Miss Kim Lilac, but with a more dwarf compact habit (3-ft. height and width) and darker purple blooms that don't fade to white. Just like Miss Kim, it has great fragrance, is tolerant to leaf diseases and has exceptional landscape performance across Zones 3 to 7.

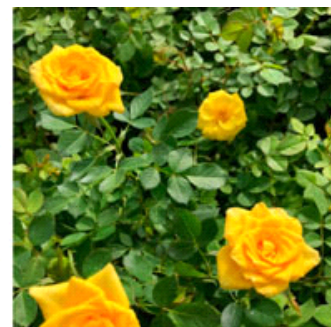
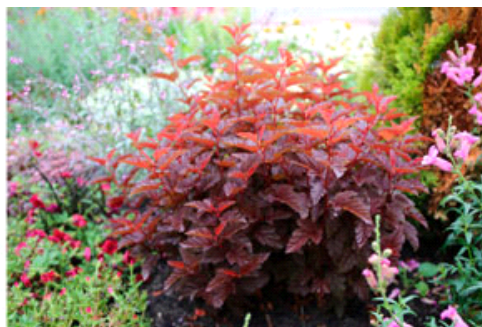
Star Roses & Plants

Scorpio Star Flower & Orion Star Flower (*Illicium* hybrid)

From one of the oldest lineages of flowering plants come two exciting modern hybrids. Evergreen, compact, native,

remontant flowering, adaptable, cold hardy (Zones 6 to 9) and deer resistant—what more could you ask for in a flowering shrub? The unique, star-shaped flowers add a playful touch to any garden with delightful blooms that appear heavily in the spring and rebloom in late summer. Orion has white flowers and Scorpio has red. These are advanced hybrids, developed by Dr. Tom Ranney at North Carolina State University, between *Illicium floridanum* and *I. mexicanum* and combine the best traits of both.

Pictured: Matcha Ball, Little Angel Physocarpus, Sunrosa Yellow Delight



First Editions

Matcha Ball (*Sorbaria sorbifolia*)

This is the perfect-sized shrub for the smallest of gardens in Zones 3 to 7! Matcha Ball false spirea forms a perfect round ball (3-ft. height by 4-ft. spread) of fern-like foliage in a fresh shade of green (that green color matches Matcha tea, thus the name). When the foliage first emerges in the spring, there's a hint of color in the leaves and petioles that ranges from red to an orange-peach in color, ultimately maturing to green. This cultivar rarely blooms, which helps maintain the form throughout the growing season and prefers moist soils in full sun to part shade.

Concept Plants

Little Angel Physocarpus (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)

Little Angel Physocarpus is a compact plant with gorgeous, warm red foliage. It's a well-branching cultivar (especially compared to the species) that sports white flowers in midsummer. It has a bushy habit with a height of 20 in. and a width of 12 in.—it's quite nice when used as a hedge along a perennial border. Little Angel thrives in sun or partial shade in any type of soil and is Zone 5a hardy, while also sporting disease tolerance to foliar pathogens. With its striking red foliage, Little Angel also looks great as a solitary potted plant on terraces and balconies.

Suntory Flowers

Sunrosa Yellow Delight (*Rosa* hybrid)

Sunrosa roses welcomes a rich vibrant new color—Yellow Delight. These compact shrub roses from Suntory Flowers are highly disease resistant with a long flowering period. Plants are heat tolerant and hardy to Zone 5. Due to its compact, 4-ft. rounded size, it's better suited for patio pots and for growers—it's a rackable rose.



Sunset Western Garden Collection

Tara Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)

Dazzling white panicles of hose-in-hose flowers in spring distinguish this lovely oakleaf hydrangea. It's stunning as a cut flower or in the garden and is suitable either as an accent or mass planting. Colorful wine-red fall foliage offers a nice surprise with rich red hues. Size reaches a 6-ft. rounded shrub, which is hardy in Zones 5 to 9. **GP**

Pictured: Tara Oakleaf Hydrangea.jpg