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## More Plants for the Pollinator Oasis

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For this month's cover story I interviewed nine different companies and gathered far more plants and information than I could cram into the magazine (and believe me, I tried to get as much in there as I could). I wanted to get the rest of the plants online so they are at least available for future reference.

### More Annuals

Since we started with annuals in the magazine, we'll do it again here.

**Salvia Mystical** from Ball FloraPlant is naturally more compact and bees absolutely love it, said Marketing Manager Stephanie Vincenti. It ships well to retail and doesn't take over combinations (sometimes salvia doesn't play nicely with others). Mystical comes in blue and white.

Ball FloraPlant also added three new colors to its **Shamrock series** of lantana: Lavender, Yellow and Lemon Glow (a yellow and white bicolor). This series has medium vigor and medium habit, making it great for landscape, hanging baskets and upright mixed containers. "It has really good heat and drought tolerance, so it's super easy for the consumer, too," Stephanie said. "Lantana is one of the things that when it comes to a consumer, it checks all the boxes."



Salvia Mystical from Ball FloraPlant.



New Violet Improved Lucky Star Pentas from PanAmerican Seed.

And finally for Ball FloraPlant, they have five series of angelonia, a class that continues to grow overall in popularity. These are pollinator magnets, and with five series, there's something for every application. For example, **Guardian Angel** is the most vigorous and tallest with upright, sturdy stems and early blooms. **Angel Dance** is the next largest and can withstand the heat, humidity and drought, featuring flexible stems that "dance" in the wind. **Archangel** is upright and uniform with that same ability to withstand the elements. **AngelFlare** has an open, V-shaped habit with medium vigor, making it great for upright containers. And finally, the **AngelMist** series is more of a low spreading variety that makes it great for containers and landscapes.

For PanAmerican Seed, in the magazine we talked about a new sedum, but there are more here to explore, including the **Lucky Star Pentas** series. According to Product Development Manager Marcus Jansen, while southern gardeners have been using pentas for a while, northerners are still working out where they fit as annuals. "It's a heat lover, but it can easily go into an annual version of a of a pollinator program," he added. "Butterflies and hummingbirds alike are all over pentas." There's a new improved violet color in the Lucky Star series, which complements six other colors.

Another exciting new introduction for PanAmerican Seed is **Always Sunny Gold**, a pollen-free, branching landscape sunflower that brings in the bees. "It is just so impressive how many blooms it pumps out,' said Senior Project Manager Robin Reuther. "And part of the reason it does that is it is pollen-free, so it's putting its energy into new flowers instead of making seed. But I have gotten the question: "if it doesn't have pollen, does that mean it's still pollinator friendly?'" And the answer is yes, it is very pollinator friendly because it has a ton of nectar."

### More Perennials

I didn't get nearly the number of perennials in to the magazine that I had information on. Darwin Perennials has been breeding monarda, including the new **Monarda BeeMine Purple**, joining Lavender, Pink and Red, said Darren Barshaw, Product Representative for Darwin. BeeMine has high disease resistance to mildew and attracts bees, butterflies and moths (it's also deer and rabbit resistant!).

Another newer introduction from Darwin is the **Digitalis Arctic Fox Lemon Cream**, which features tall stems of light yellow large tubular flowers that bees and hummingbirds love. There's also an older Rose color in the series. And while there aren't any new colors this year, the **Agastache Summerlong** series deserves a mention for its long-lasting blooms that continue right through fall. There are four colors there: Coral, Lemon, Lilac and Peach.



Agastache Summerlong from Darwin Perennials.



Penstemon barbatus Bejeweled Pink Pearls from Walters Gardens.



SunSeekers Sweet Fuchsia echinacea from Monrovia.



Agastache Honeysticks mix from Dümmen Orange.

Dümmen Orange had more perennials than I could get into the magazine, too. The **Agastache Honeysticks** series has three colors (Ember, Gold and Purple), and was selected for its compact stature and large clusters of tubular flowers on each spike. It's hardy down to USDA Zone 4, which Dümmen's Marta Maria Garcia said makes it one of the hardiest agastache series out there.

On the echinacea side, Monrovia has two new series that are longer-flowering than traditional echinacea: the **SunSeekers** series, and the **SunMagic** series. "We can't seem to produce enough echinacea or varieties of echinacea to satisfy the demand that has been growing for a couple of years," said Katie Tamony of Monrovia. "I think one of the key trends is brighter color blooms, as well as more variety on a plant of different colored blooms and plants that stay really more compact and robust."

Both these series match that demand for brighter colors, as well as longer flowering time. New addition in the SunSeekers series include White Perfection, Pumpkin Pie, Golden Sun and Sweet Fuchsia. In SunMagic, Petite Burgundy is new.

Another plant that turned heads at Cultivate'25 is **Crocsmia Dark Fire**. It has really dark foliage with bright orange flowers. Hardy down to Zone 6, it's a vigorous, clump-forming perennial that hummingbirds adore.

Walters Gardens also had more plants to talk about. "We've also seen really good engagement on our recent introductions of **Stokesia laevis Totally Stoked Riptide** and **Penstemon barbatus Bejeweled Pink Pearls** and **Rose Rhinestones**," said Marketing Manager Andrew Jager. "Here it seems like the overlap of bright colors, long bloom season and servicing of multiple pollinator species has led to their popularity."

### **And Finally, More Shrubs**

Plants don't just provide nectar and pollen for pollinators, they also provide a food source (leaves), habitat and other ecological benefits. Bailey Nurseries intentionally focuses on providing a palette of plants that benefit pollinators, said Marketing & Communications Manager Ryan McEnaney. "This includes both native selections and non-native varieties that have shown incredible pollinator activity. Native selections like **FlowerFull Smooth Hydrangea** and non-native varieties like **Pop Star Reblooming Hydrangeas**, with its landing pad-like lacecap bloom, are a great case study in how both species see flies, bees and butterflies all interacting profusely throughout their bloom cycle," he said. "A third species of hydrangea that, while not native to North America, has shown itself to be a pollinator magnet is panicle hydrangeas. My favorite is **White Diamonds Panicle Hydrangea** because it has a looser bloom that allows easier access to the pollen."



Bouvardia Estrellita Scarlet  
from Spring Meadow Nursery.



Buddleia Lo & Behold Blue Chip  
from Spring Meadow Nursery.



FlowerFull Smooth hydrangea from Bailey Nurseries.



Gardenia Big Beauty from Bailey Nurseries.

Bailey Nurseries also has the new **Big Beauty Gardenia**. “I love Big Beauty Gardenia as an alternative to a big green hedge. Its nice size is great for a privacy screen, and the fact that it’s covered in flowers makes it an added bonus for the fragrance and nectar source for pollinators,” Ryan said. “Big Beauty has a double flower, so its primary function for pollinators is nectar as an energy source.”

At Spring Meadow, the proof is on the bloom. “Growers and retailers both respond to plants with visible, verifiable pollinator activity. These are plants that attract bees, butterflies and other pollinators in observable numbers, whether in the container on a bench, or in-

ground,” said Natalie Carmolli, public relations specialist for Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs. “Plants that have observable pollinator activity often appear in photos on social media, which builds consumer trust.”

Her examples included Butterfly Bush, which are often best sellers, like the **Lo & Behold** series and **Pugster Blue** buddleia. Both are compact and sterile, or non-invasive. “**Beyond Midnight** and **Beyond Pink’d** bluebeard (Caryopteris) bring late-season blooms and nonstop pollinator appeal” she added. “These compact, well-branched shrubs thrive in containers, offering easy production, tidy retail presentation, and vibrant blue or pink blooms that are usually swarmed with pollinators.”

She recommended talking about “native roots” when highlighting cultivars, which shows they come from native plants but have breeding that make them last longer and behave during production. “Hummingbirds choose flowers based on color, nectar availability, shape and positioning. Tubular or funnel-shaped blooms held away from foliage make hovering and feeding easier. The bright red, tubular flowers of **Estrellita Scarlet Firecracker Bush** (Bouvardia) are perfectly situated to attract hummingbirds. Its compact, upright habit and long-lasting blooms provide reliable nectar rewards combined with a diminutive habit that creates a show-stopping display for containers, landscapes and retail display.

Katie Tamony at Monrovia had a couple of additional shrubs to talk about, as well, including the **Jazzy Jewel Hibiscus** series. Only hardy to Zones 9-11, this is a warmer-weather favorite, with dazzling long-lasting flowers and lush green foliage. There are four colors: Ruby, Gold, Amber and Opal.

A shrub that does double duty, **Bountiful Blue Blueberry** also, you guessed it, produces fruits. It’s an award-winning variety that features blueish foliage, pink-blushed flowers and juicy blueberries. It’s hardy to Zones 6-10. **GP**

### Let Me Know

Do you have great new pollinator plant introductions? Email me at [jpolan@ballpublishing.com](mailto:jpolan@ballpublishing.com)—I’d love to continue the coverage every month with more plants for retailers to carry.