Green Fuse Perennial Introductions, Two Challenges and How to Diagnose Problems

News and commentary for the perennial market

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE greenPROFIT MAGAZINE

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Perennial PULSE

News and commentary on the global perennial plant market

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

What's Happening Here?
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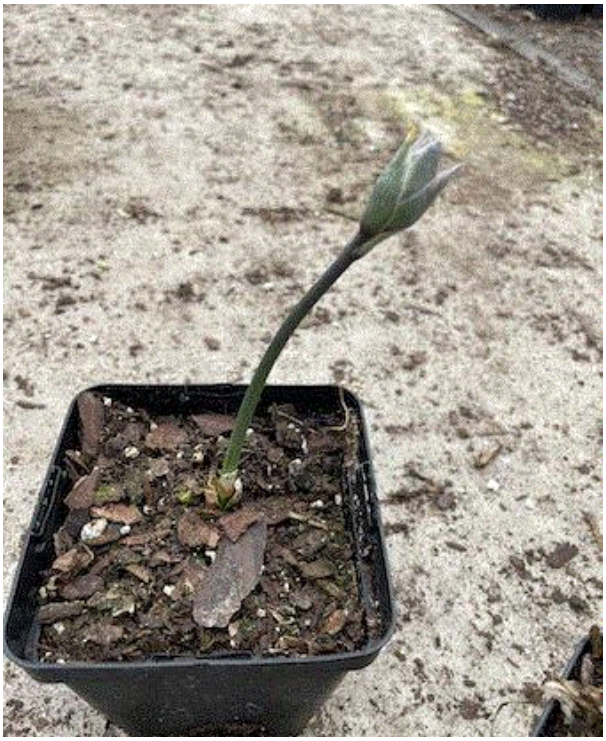
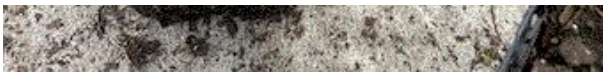
What's Happening Here?

I'm hoping you'd agree that hostas are generally pretty easy to grow. Sure, there are a few nuances, but for the most part I find them to be fairly trouble-free. Having said that, check out this image:





As fellow editor-at-large JC Chong (editor of *PestTalks*) would say, “What the … ?” This alien-like arm protruding from the ground is definitely not what’s expected to appear as growth commences in the early spring. Is this, in fact, some unknown alien projectile or is there a more likely down-to-earth explanation?

Please enjoy the newsletter as you think about the image above. Do you know “What’s happening here?” Stay tuned—I’ll share the answer before signing off.

Mystery #2

This week, I have a bonus challenge for you. I received an email asking if I knew what was going on with this monarda. Here are the images I received:

I didn’t get much background information with the initial correspondence. I was told that the plants originally appeared uniform and healthy when they received them, but chlorosis began to appear two to three weeks later.

When I come across issues such as these, I typically ask a series of questions to help narrow down the possibilities?

- In this case, one of the first things I’d ask is: “How do the roots look? Are they white and healthy or do they appear brown in color? Are there numerous roots or are the roots sparse?" If the roots appear unhealthy, I would approach this as a root rot issue and apply a broad-spectrum fungicide drench. If the roots look good, I would ask another question.
- The second question would likely be fertility related. Has a soil test been done? If not, do a pour-through or a 2:1 soil test to confirm if the EC and pH are adequate, too low or too high.

Consider sending soil and tissue samples to a lab for nutritional analysis.

- If the roots appear normal and the fertility levels are within the acceptable ranges then I would ask about what treatments, if any, were applied to the plants. Applications such as fungicides, insecticides and PGRs can all cause plants to appear abnormal. Look first at applications applied within three days of the first symptoms. If nothing stands out, expand the timeframe to within one or two weeks before the symptoms appeared.
- Still not able to determine the cause? Consider expanding the parameters. Are the symptomatic plants also located in a different area of the same greenhouse or are they in a different greenhouse? Are symptoms present in just one location or all locations?
- Are other types of plants showing similar symptoms? If so, what do they have in common? Think bigger. Are there different water sources, injectors, fertilizers, furnace types and so on?
- Still stumped? Many problems aren't black or white. Consider submitting samples to a diagnostic clinic. In many cases, you'll either learn the cause of the problem or at the very least be able to rule out some of the things it's not.

Every situation is different and may require different questions and sub-questions, but I wanted to give you an example of how I would approach-problem solving in the case of this monarda.

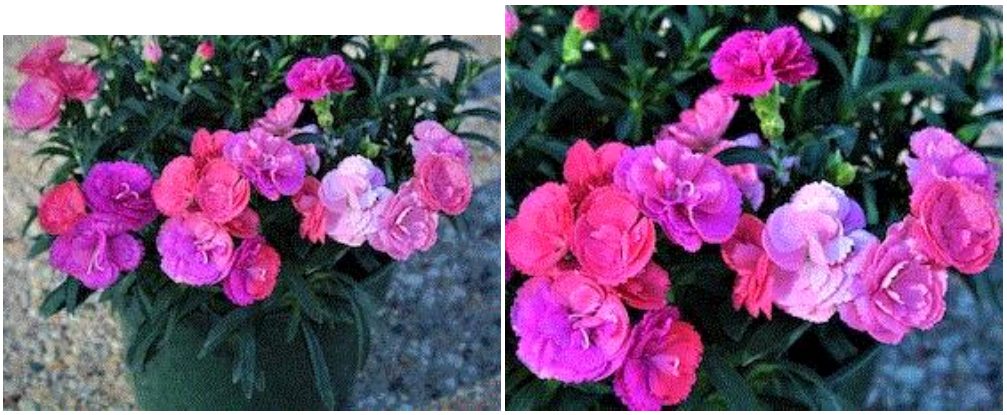
Getting back to the problem at hand—I've asked the grower to get me some more information, and to look at the roots and check the crops' nutritional status. In the meantime, I'm curious if you've seen these symptoms on monarda before, and if so, I'd like to hear what was causing the symptoms and how you managed the problem. If you haven't seen this before, I'm also interested in hearing your thoughts as to what you think might be going on.

Send your comments and feedback to me at ppilon@ballpublishing.com.

New from Green Fuse

From my understanding, Green Fuse had about 30 new perennials on display at the California Spring Trials. Here are three of their great new introductions:

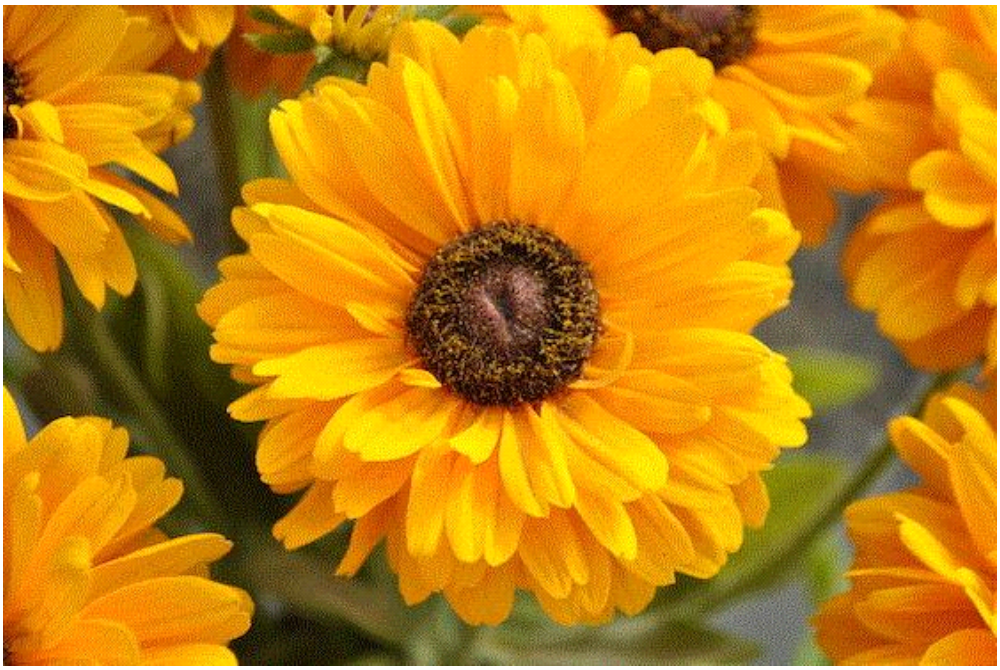
Dianthus Constant Cadence Potpourri



Potpourri is a truly unique addition to the Constant Cadence series. It offers a multitude of color as the flowers open a deep fuchsia and fade to a bright rose. Many flowers are even half-and-half in this extremely stable selection. Being day neutral and having no vernalization requirement,

Potpourri is a great dianthus for perennial programs and makes a beautiful potted plant crop! Hardy to Zone 4.

Rudbeckia Dakota Double Gold



Unlike most rudbeckia, Dakota Double Gold is completely day neutral and can be produced for sales any time of the year. You read it right—there's no need for vernalization or to provide long day lighting to produce Dakota Double Gold for early sales. As an added bonus, it's hardy to Zone 5.

Leucanthemum Whisker White

A complete reinvention of the "crazy daisy" type of shasta. Whisker White is completely daylength neutral and requires zero cooling hours to bloom. This makes scheduling easy and allows growers to produce it throughout the entire season—including fall programs. Whisker White has massive 5 - to 6-in. flowers and continues blooming in the garden all growing season. Hardy to Zone 4.

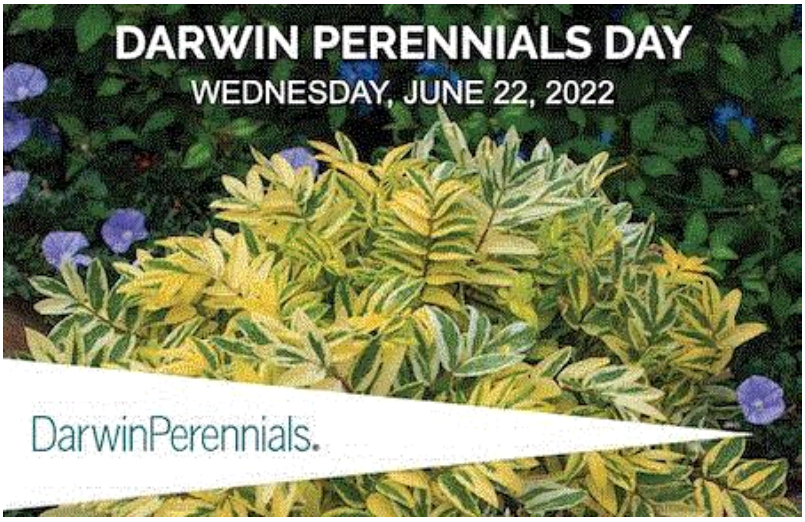
As you can see, Green Fuse specializes in introducing easy-to-grow perennials with no vernalization requirements. This allows growers to reliably grow their perennials throughout the entire growing season (spring to fall). I look forward to sharing several other Green Fuse perennial introductions in future newsletters. Stay tuned.

Don’t Miss These Perennial Events

I was planning to tell you about these two upcoming perennial events, but fellow editor-at-large Ellen Wells (editor of buZZ!*) beat me to the punch in her newsletter that she sent out yesterday. Rather than reinventing the wheel, why don’t I pass along her announcements.*

Darwin Perennials Day

It’s good to have a sense of normalcy back and by that I mean holding in-person industry events. Such as the ever-anticipated Darwin Perennials Day! It’s back and in-person and happening June 22 in The Gardens at Ball.



It’ll be a full day of perennials education, networking with peers and discussions with suppliers. And, of course, there are the Zone-5 overwintered trial garden comparisons, too, allowing you to judge the varieties on what's most important for your customer.

Bring yourself and your team for:

- Visits with 25-plus perennial suppliers in the tented showcase
- Exciting plants in the New Variety Courtyard
- Browsing extensive perennial garden beds from leading perennial breeders
- Visiting education stations: “When to grow seed or vegetative Echinacea”; “How callused cuttings are changing propagation”; and “Tips and tricks from experienced perennial growers”
- Taking guided tours of The Gardens and the Ball Helix Central Research & Development Center

You’ll also get a chance to listen to Suzanne Wainwright-Evans of Buglady Consulting give the day’s keynote presentation, “Implementing Bio-Control Agents.” Both breakfast and lunch are

included, so plan to spend the entire 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on the Ball Horticultural campus.

Registration is now open. Get your name on the list by registering at www.darwinperennialsday.com.

Perennials' Big Daddy

And then there's the Big Daddy of the perennial meetings—the Perennial Plant Association National Symposium. After a two-year hiatus, it's now slated for August 1-5 and taking place in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It's going to have all your old favorites—tours of public and private gardens, educational opportunities, a trade show and a boatload of networking and social events.

The tour attractions include a private home foodscape garden; Rock Lititz; the Donald Pell Gardens; Quality Greenhouses; and Stoneleigh Garden, not to mention evening pleasure visits to Longwood Gardens, Chanticleer and North Creek Nursery.

And the speakers! Such a good lineup with Longwood's Paul Redman, Mt. Cuba's Jourdan Cole, Phyto Studios' Claudia West, Terrain's Melissa Lowrie, and Jared Hughes of Groovy Plants Ranch.

Go ahead a sign up now as registration for the event is open. And keep in mind you have two registration options—the week-long event or the three-day event that covers the core elements of the symposium. For more information about PPA's National Symposium and to register, head over to HERE.

I'd like to thank Ellen for unknowingly allowing me to steal her perennial content. That's what she gets for sending out her newsletter a day before mine :).

If you're in the retail side of the business and don't already get this great newsletter, I invite you to click HERE to read her latest edition. And if you like what you see, sign up to receive buZZ! *every week in your own inbox.*

The Answer is …

At the top of the newsletter, I showed the above image and asked if you knew what was going on with this hosta. I observed these plants in a group of Hosta Patriot. I've seen this numerous times in the past and scratch my head every time.

To validate my suspicions, I reached out to Hans Hansen (prestigeous breeder at Walters Gardens). Hans has also seen this odd phenomenon on occasion in the past. He can confirm it is *NOT* a tentacle from an alien or some other supernatural phenomenon. This is a flower stem developing without any basal foliage. Why does this occur?

In some cases, flowers develop in the crown and may or may not be visible in the fall prior to overwintering. When this occurs, the flower usually survives the winter and emerges with warmer spring temperatures. The flower stem appears to have strong apical dominance and does not allow the basal leaves to break dormancy and begin to grow until the flowering is done. Although this provides a neat and unusual appearance, I'm assuming consumers may not be as appreciative or understanding of this phenomenon.

Eventually, after the flower opens and senesces, leaves will begin to grow and expand. To hasten this process, I suggest trimming the flower stems at the soil line as soon as they're observed. This will release the basal leaves and the hosta will begin to grow and appear normal shortly after the flowers are removed.

Thanks for reading this edition of *Perennial Pulse*. My email is paul@opelgrowers.com if you have any comments, article suggestions or if you'd just like to say "hello."

Paul Pilon
Editor-at-Large—*Perennial Pulse*

Director of Growing—Opel Growers

This email was received by you and 34,512 other fine subscribers!

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