

New Intros From Darwin, Upcoming Events, and a Springtime Challenge



News and commentary for the perennial market

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Perennial PULSE

News and commentary on the global perennial plant market



What's Happening Here?

I imagine many of you have already been putting in some super long days, if not weeks, by now. I hope your spring is going well. Our weather here in Michigan has been anything but cooperative—cool and rainy most of the time. And now it's super hot: 90 degrees Fahrenheit today.

Since we're all super busy with spring, here's a challenge I think most everyone can solve:





Here's a small crop of Penstemon Huskers Red. Notice the straight line of plants growing down the block. I bet most of you have seen this on one crop or another over the years. That being said, I don't think any clues are necessary on this one. It's time for me to ask, "What's happening here?"

Stay tuned—I'll reveal the cause of this phantom line before signing off.



Liquid Shade

At some point each spring, it's beneficial to apply liquid shade, AKA whitewash, to greenhouses to reduce solar gain and excessive temperatures inside greenhouse structures. This is especially true with production facilities that don't have or utilize shade curtains within the structures.

The time to apply whitewash varies with the year. In most years, I typically apply it during the third or fourth week of April here in Michigan. However, this spring has been cooler, cloudier and wetter than our usual spring, which allowed us to delay this application.



When I first got into the industry, I used to apply whitewash manually using hydraulic sprayers. I actually enjoyed this yearly task up on the rooftops. Fast forward nearly 30 years and operations such as ours are utilizing helicopters to apply the liquid shade. I can't imagine how many hours it would've taken to apply whitewash to our 10-acre facility (during peak shipping season). The helicopter did the job in just 30 minutes.

There are a couple whitewash products on the market. The ones I've used are [Kool Ray Classic Liquid Shade Concentrated](#) and [ReduSol shading agents](#). Both of these products are readily available through many distributors.



PPA's National Symposium

I can't believe it's nearly mid-May. Summer will be here before you know it. If you're obsessed with perennials like I am, I encourage you to attend the Perennial Plant Association's National Symposium in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, this summer.



The National Symposium is being held August 1-5, 2022. There's something for everyone: 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.

Be sure to check out the entire lineup of tours and speakers on the symposium website: perennialplant.org/page/2022NationalSymposium.

Stay tuned—I'll be sharing more updates in the weeks ahead.



New Perennials From Darwin

Delphinium Red Lark



I couldn't attend the California Spring Trials this year, but from my understanding, Delphinium Red Lark was a smashing hit. Red Lark is a hybrid propagated via tissue culture, and provides better winter hardiness and garden longevity compared to the open-pollinated types. It's an eyecatcher with its unique coral red color. FYI—it's the only delphinium with this color on the market. Red Lark is very sturdy and doesn't require staking. Hardy to Zone 5a.

Echinacea Sombrero Poco Series



The Sombrero series has become one of the best and most reliable echinacea series on the market. Then its offspring the Sombrero Poco series was born and also has potential to become industry standards, too. The cultivars in the Sombrero Poco series have uniform habits, uniform flowering, first-year programmable flowering, great vigor and compact growing habits. This year, Darwin Perennials is adding White, Hot Red and Pink to the series. The Sombrero Poco series is hardy to Zone 4b and is great by itself or when used in mixed containers and color bowls.

Kniphofia Glow Stick



Here's a new spin on an old-time favorite. While the traditional varieties are from seed and the newer varieties tend to be from tissue culture, Glow Stick is the first kniphofia to be offered as an unrooted cutting. I must say, that's very cool. Glow Stick is hardy to Zone 6a and produces bright yellow flowers continuously from mid-summer through frost.

A Few More

Sedum What a Doozie



Here's a potential new sedum if you're looking for a great new variegated variety. It's very stable and holds its variegation very well. What a Doozie has attractive white-and-green variegated foliage throughout the season and gains an attractive blush-pink coloration and creamy pink flowers in the fall. Hardy to Zone 5a.

Polemonium Golden Feathers



Looking to brighten up the shade? Golden Feathers will do just that. It has super attractive yellow-and-green variegated foliage. It has a much brighter appearance and holds its color better than previous versions on the market. The bluish-purple flowers are a great and welcome bonus in the late spring and early summer. Hardy to Zone 5b.

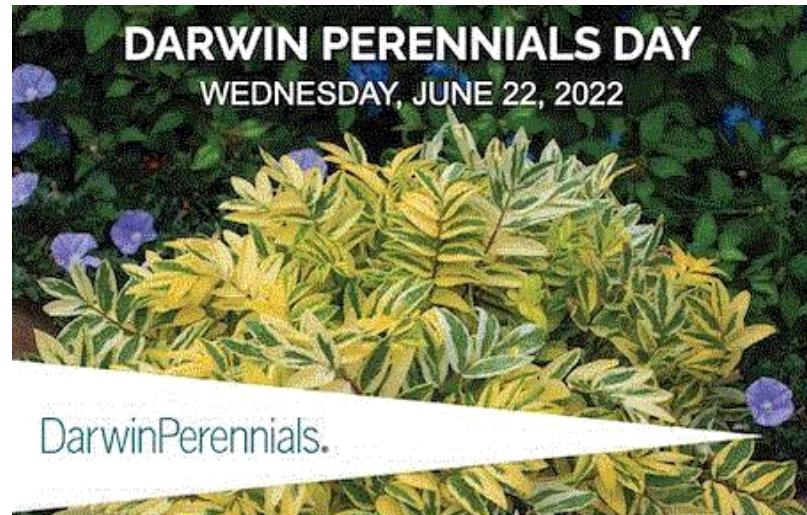
Oenothera Evening Sun



Evening Sun is a great new evening primrose. Its common name accurately depicts how the plants bloom. The bright yellow flowers of Evening Sun open in the afternoon and continue blooming throughout the night. It's a great plant for attracting butterflies and moths. The flowers look great above its wide, silvery green foliage. Hardy to Zone 5a. Evening Sun is great alone or in mixed containers.

Darwin Perennials Day

After seeing these few introductions from Darwin Perennials, now seems like an appropriate time to invite you to [Darwin Perennials Day](#) where you can view all their new and old introductions.



DarwinPerennials.com

Darwin Perennials Day is a full day of perennials education, networking with peers and discussions with suppliers. Attendees will also be able to stroll through the Zone 5 overwintered comparison trial gardens.

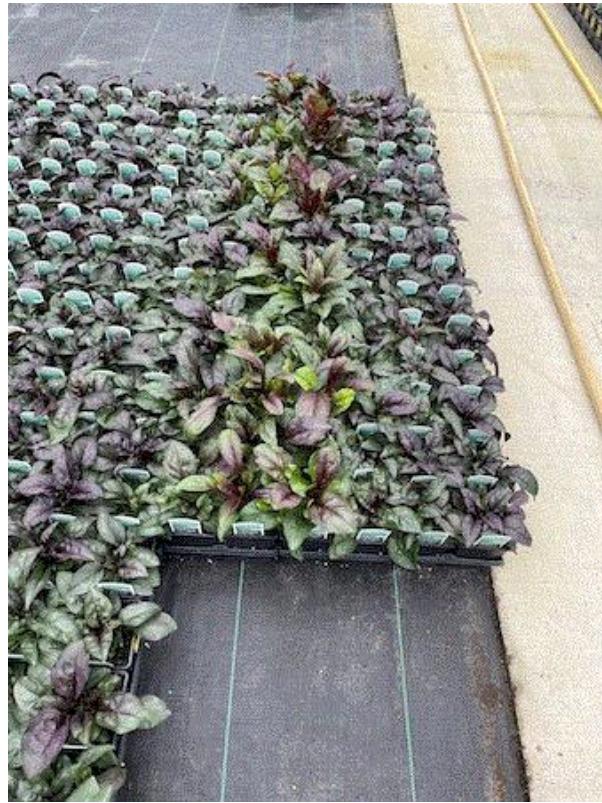
Bring yourself and your team for:

- Visits with +25 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 & Tricks From Experienced Perennial Growers"
- 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.

The Answer is ...



A few moments ago, I shared this image and asked if you knew what's causing many of these penstemon to grow larger than the others. Although the answer to the cause of this straight line across the crop is all too familiar to some, it may be a new experience for others. As I've suggested in the past, it's often beneficial to step back away from the problem crop and look at the big picture.



In this case, a quick glance at the production area reveals that hanging baskets are hung directly

above the crop. The drip line of the of baskets during irrigation events is directly below where the taller plants are growing. These plants are taller because they're wetter and receiving more fertilizer than the shorter adjacent plants.

To reduce this from happening in the future, growers can consider reducing the run time of the basket lines. The baskets can be watered multiple times each day using less water with each irrigation to prevent excess leaching from occurring. When done properly, leaching will be greatly reduced or eliminated altogether, and the plants below will grow and appear normal.

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*
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