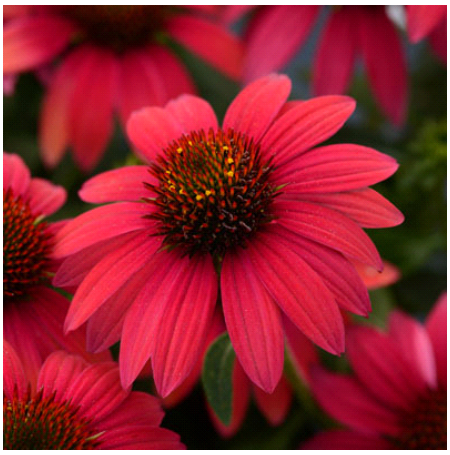
greenPROFIT

Front Lines

9/1/2019

AAS Perennial Trials

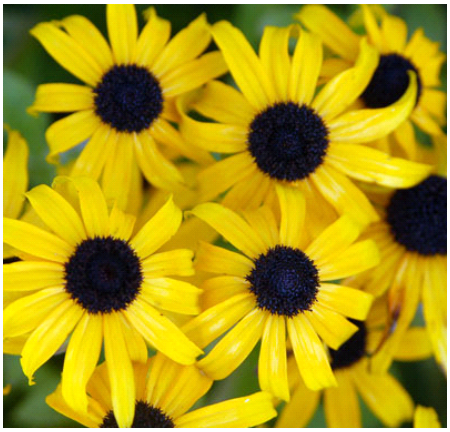
Paul Pilon



In 2016, All-America Selections (AAS), in partnership with the Perennial Plant Association (PPA), began a three-year trialing process for herbaceous perennials across numerous trial locations throughout North America. There were five entries in the inaugural year grown against 10 best-in-class comparison varieties. Throughout each growing season, 24 professional, independent and volunteer judges evaluated them. Only those entries that performed better than the comparisons are granted AAS award designations.

Unlike traditional AAS seed trials, entries in the very first Herbaceous Perennial Trial could consist of either seed or vegetative cultivars. Additionally, the entries could be recent introductions at the time they entered the trials. The first two winners were recently announced. They are:

• **Echinacea Sombrero Baja Burgundy** from Darwin Perennials, which performed remarkably well and survived three tough winters. The AAS judges noted this standout's hardiness, sturdy branching and floriferous blooming habit. Large, rich burgundy blooms cover the mounding green foliage on upright stems from mid-summer until the first frost. Gardeners will appreciate its ability to attract birds and pollinators into the garden, while being resistant to grazing by deer. Hardy to Zone 4.



• **Rudbeckia x American Gold Rush** bred by Brent Horvath of Intrinsic Perennial Gardens, Inc. Its strong performance secured its place in history as a 2020 award winner. American Gold Rush has hairy foliage, which resists attacks from pathogens such as Septoria that many rudbeckia cultivars are prone to. The plants are covered with golden-yellow flowers with black centers from July through September. Hardy to Zone 4. **GP**