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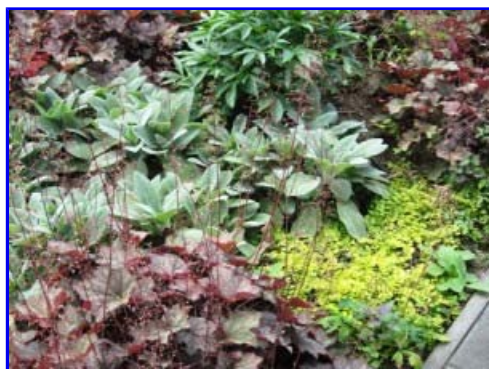
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GGW Plant Pick Of The Month

August 10th, 2008 by fsorin · [16 Comments](#)

We at GGW decided that it was time to add another monthly topic to our blog. So, the idea of the ‘GGW Plant Pick of the Month’ was born. Each month, on the 10th, I will select a plant to be our pick of the month. I’ll explain why I’ve chosen it, what I like about it and perhaps how I’ve used it in my garden. Then, it will be up to you, dear bloggers, to respond. You can post about any cultivar that you love, new ideas on how to use it, or just about anything else that has something to do with this plant. In other words, you can take it and run in any direction that grabs you. Like what Nan has done with The Garden Design Workshop, at the end of that month’s cycle (which will be on the 9th), a summary will be written with links to those folks who have posted, along with photos.

So, on that note, a drum roll please! GGW’s Plant Pick of the Month for August 2008 is HEUCHERA!!



The only way that I can describe heuchera is that it is similar to the ‘little black dress’ for women (sorry guys!) Or perhaps, could it be the navy blazer for you fellows? It is just one of those perennials that can be used safely on practically any occasion: sun, partial shade (shade in a moist location), in vignettes with pastels, in contrast with sharp, bright leaved or deep hued plants and on formal or casual occasions.

Of this genus of 55 species of evergreen and semi-evergreen perennials, the majority are indigenous to North America woodlands and rocky sites, mostly the Rocky Mountains, with a few from Mexico. They are clump forming mounds, usually used for their leaf colors and often variegated with veins running through them. I find the flowers to be inconsequential unless planted en masse.

I was first introduced to *Heuchera micrantha*

‘Palace Purple’ when Chris Woods ripped out what was then my front yard and redesigned it with native perennials and deciduous shrubs. He used *Heuchera micrantha* ‘Palace Purple’ with *Geranium psilostemon*, which I absolutely loved. What initially struck me was its deep burgundy, almost blackish leaves: over the years they became overlapping and lush. Its color catapulted me in using this deep hue throughout my garden as a base color.

Another burgundy leaved heuchera to which I was recently introduced by Alan Russell of Russell’s Wholesale Nursery is *Heuchera* ‘Midnight Rose’, an introduction from Terra Nova. It is described on the back of the tag as “hot pink polka dots adorn this vigorous growing ‘Obsidian’ sport. Pink flecks emerge in spring and continue to enlarge and brighten before lightening to cream as the season progresses. Bold, black and beautiful for sunny locations”. I am experimenting with it in an area of my front border that I just replanted, along with pennisetum, cabbage, a pink agastache and *Salvia nemerosa*. For more information, click on: www.terravanurseries.com.



This spring at Chanticleer I noted that in the formal garden behind the main house (which is Dan Benarcik's domain), another heuchera was planted as the centerpiece in a formal arrangement. I am not familiar with which one it is: perhaps Dan will clue us in.



Some of the newer introductions are the caramel and chartreuse/yellow colored leaved heucheras. I recently bought some lime plants to try in different areas of my garden. Alan Russell has labeled this one as *Heuchera x villosa* 'Citronelle' and describes it as a native, evergreen lime/yellow leaved perennial with mounds to 24" across. He says that it does well in partial shade in average soil.



And finally, a close up of *Heuchera villosa*

'Appalachian Mountains' which magnifies the subtle beauty of this plant with its multi-lobed, soft hairy leaves. It works beautifully in a woodland, native garden.



Tags: [GGW Plant Pick of The Month](#)

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16 responses so far ↓

- [1 Ewa](#) // Aug 10, 2008 at 11:56 am

This is very good idea 😊 and heuchera deserves the opening position 😊
What is most important they do keep leaves in the winter.

Ewa-

Yep...heuchera seemed to be a logical choice for the 'first batter' up. Your point is well taken that most of them keep their leaves intact during cold months in a lot of climates. Fran

- [2 Nancy Bond](#) // Aug 10, 2008 at 1:29 pm

A beautiful and versatile plant — I look forward to your pick on the 10th of each month!

Nancy-

Thanks....versatile is certainly the right word for this plant. If you have any you want to share with us, send us a link back to your site! Fran

- [3 Benjamin](#) // Aug 10, 2008 at 1:47 pm

Like the newer coneflower cultivars, I can't get the newer heucheras to do anything for me—like, you know, LIVE. I'm terribly distraught over this—it might be my clay, but everyone has clay.

Benjamin-

Am sorry to hear that. How about some of the older cultivars..how are they doing? There is clayish soil and then there is heavy duty clay soil. Have you tried adding some organic matter before planting them? I give a plant 5 or 6 attempts (yes, I do waste a lot

of money on this) if I really love it before giving up on it! Fran

- [4 gina](#) // Aug 10, 2008 at 8:20 pm

I love the Purple Palace! I bought a smallish one last year and it really hated the sun so bad that I had to move it UNDER my Peach Tree until I can find a shady spot for it. Now I just keep forgetting it's there.

Gina-

Yep...Palace Purple is a real winner. And perhaps now that this post has gone up, you'll make a special effort to go visit it often under that Peach Tree! Thanks for writing in! Fran

- [5 Frances](#) // Aug 10, 2008 at 9:27 pm

Hi Fran, good choice as most gardeners have at least one of these growing in their gardens. We have purchased many over the years, beginning back in the seventies with what we called Coral Bells, being a young gardener, barely knowing the common names of plants. They had lovely reddish blooms and could be divided to fill a bed easily, that was in Pennsylvania. Fast forward to the introduction of Palace Purple, that was a giant step for heucherakind. Like you, I fell in love with the evergreen purple leaves of this easy to grow plant. There has been an explosion in cultivars and most have not survived the drought years we have been suffering through in TN. None of mine look like the lush photos from some of you all getting adequate rain. The ones that are alive are shrinking, the leaves getting smaller and smaller. Even in shade and with extra water, it is a struggle. And yet there are a few doing well, Summer Storm, or it might be Stormy Sky is a winner, as are the self sown seedlings that are mostly green with white veining. Please, rain gods, look kindly on us.

Frances-

Am sorry to hear that you are having such difficulty with your latest heucheras due to lack of rain. Although they like moist soil, I have always found them to be survivors even in dry summers without extra watering. But then again, I don't live in TN where the climate is markedly different. If you wouldn't mind giving us a link to 'Stormy Sky' or 'Summer Storm' on your blog, that would be great. Other folks have mentioned that they have had problems in keeping their heucheras alive. Perhaps this is one that other gardeners can use in their gardens as successfully as you have. We have had some rain (and cool weather...yippee!) over the past few days. I'm sending wishes that it comes your way soon.....sit tight! Fran

- [6 Jacqueline](#) // Aug 10, 2008 at 10:46 pm

I had no luck with the purple variety, although a green one is flourishing in a spot where I had paired it with foam flower (tiarella cordifolia) and bishop's cap (epimedium), both of which have just sort of disappeared. Next year I think I will just stick with the Heuchera.

I look forward to reading about the plants of the month and always enjoy the various articles and observations.

Jacqueline-

Doesn't it just drive you crazy when certain perennials seem to have disappeared from one season to the next? Why not try a mass of heuchera in the area that you mentioned above? Am glad that you enjoy what we write about on our blog....it does tend to be a versatile group! Fran

- [7 Sylvia](#) // Aug 11, 2008 at 8:00 am

I love Heuchera, it does very well for me in South West England (we get plenty of rain!). The last two years I have used it in pots and it has excellent but we haven't had any hot weather. Sorry I don't have a blog to post and pictures but I am looking forward to reading about this lovely plant. I think this is going to be a great idea.

Thank you Fran. Best wishes Sylvia (England)

Sylvia-

Thanks for your support of this new monthly concept. It makes sense that heuchera would do so well in your climate because it does tend to like moist soil: although I have some that have survived surprisingly well in 'non-watered' areas. I also have used it successfully in pots as filler plants and it does work beautifully....thanks for your reminder of that. Fran

- [8 Sam the garden guy](#) // Aug 11, 2008 at 2:40 pm

I am a big fan of Palace Purple, I plant it on a hillside which has medium shade and it grows well. I give it a boost twice a year with Mittleider nutrients and it grows like crazy.

Sam the garden guy-

Yep, it doesn't get much better than 'Palace Purple' does it? What is it Mittleider nutrients? Do tell!! Fran

- [9 VP](#) // Aug 11, 2008 at 6:17 pm

You don't know how timely your choice is 😊

I'm launching a new blog on Friday - I'm opening my garden over the web as a fundraiser. Guess which plant gets a post all to itself!

Hope to see you there...

PS There's also a substantial piece on the garden's design that also serves as an entry to next month's GBDW on slopes...

VP-

Am glad that I'm in good company. Will mark down in my calendar to check out your new blog on Friday. Send us all a reminder as well...with its name. Good luck! Fran

- [10 Frances](#) // Aug 12, 2008 at 12:57 pm

Hi Fran, I don't have a link to a photo of this, but here is one from the Dave's Garden site.

<http://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/go/32483/>

This correct name is heuchera Stormy Seas. I knew it had Storm in the name. It was purchased in 2000 at the Antique Rose Emporium in Texas while I still lived in Houston and brought it to TN with me. It is the most drought resistant and least winter heaving of all the ones I have tried to grow.

Thanks Frances. Hope others will check it out. And will offer the link at the end of the month. Perhaps someone else has one in their garden as well. Much appreciated. Fran

- [11 Tina Ramsey](#) // Aug 13, 2008 at 2:09 pm

I have always posted a 'Plant of the Month' Pick on my blog so this is simple for me. This month's Plant of the Month at Tiger Gardens can be found here: <http://tinaramsey.blogspot.com/2008/08/plant-of-month-august-2008.html>

I chose Helenium. Heucheras are great too but for me they do so much better in the cooler months.

Tina-

Thanks for telling us about your 'Plant of the Month'. We didn't know that you were doing it. I do think that your choice for August is fantastic. That helenium is a real stalwart in the garden and does well in combination with so many other plants. Good photos as well! Fran

- [12 Becky Robert](#) // Aug 13, 2008 at 5:17 pm

I love the colors and variety Heuchera can bring to a shade garden. The possibilities of colors seem endless. Check out this post on what heuchera can do for your shade garden. <http://blogs.scottarboretum.org/gardenseeds/2008/06/heuchera/>

Becky-

Great post on heucheras. Thanks for offering us the link. I too have been struck in recent years with the associations with food in the names of these new introductions. Am still trying to adjust to 'caramel' and a few of the others. If you have any suggestions for striking plant combinations for 'caramel', do pass them on. Fran

- [13 2greenthumbsup](#) // Aug 13, 2008 at 10:23 pm

Hi Fran,

My mom's always been a fan of Heuchera, but it's only this summer that I discovered one that I really like.

It's called Heuchera 'Strike It Rich Gold'. I included it in my list of [3 favorite perennials](#). Love those limey greens and yellows. They seem to add sunshine to the garden even on a cloudy day.

Cathy

Cathy-

Thanks for the link. I love the shape of its leaves and the fact that it has burgundy in it. What a possibility for great plant combinations. I'll have to keep a look out for it! Fran

- [14 VP](#) // Aug 14, 2008 at 5:53 pm

Hi Fran,

As promised here's the new blog with the Heuchera and design articles - enjoy!

<http://vpopengarden.blogspot.com/>

There's also a link on Veg Plotting, plus a sparkly invitation for Friday's (15th Aug) post. The garden's open until 21st September...

VP-

Thanks so much for sharing. I got on for just a moment so that I could grasp what you are doing...and it's pretty phenomenal. A great idea. Will return to visit in depth when I have more time. Fran

- [15 Tina Ramsey](#) // Aug 15, 2008 at 8:30 am

Fran, Picking a plant of the month is a worthwhile thing for the community. It seemed presumptuous at first to me when I started it on my blog, but thought, well, it IS my blog so I can do what I want. I think it helps me remember those good performers and others might learn from my little bit of experience that are in the same locale. Heucheras are great plants and that is one I have not selected though I have quite a few in a collection. Yours look great and I love them, especially since they are evergreen. Thanks.

- [16 Mark](#) // Aug 25, 2008 at 4:05 pm

Hi Fran,

We've had these now for the past two years and have really enjoyed the plants. So much, that we decided to line our new front walkway with them. The transition of colors and foliage: Dark Maroon to caramel to lime green makes a great statement.

Mark

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