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New Plants for a New Decade

Monday, February 1, 2010 | by [Peggy Riccio](#)

Each year, the horticultural industry introduces hundreds of new plants. Hybridizers dabble in genetics to produce new cultivars while explorers travel the world to bring back unique plants.

[Photo Gallery](#)



Hydrangea arborescens 'Incrediball,' courtesy Proven Winners Color Choice

Because each year brings with it so many new plants, it would be impossible to relay all of them in one short article. To narrow the scope of which new plants I'd cover, I chose to focus on ornamentals, not vegetables or herbs, and not roses; roses live in a family all their own. There are many new colors of flowers, but what is really new is when the plant itself has been redefined in our minds. If we think of a plant as looking a particular way and someone has either found or hybridized it so that it changes the way we think of that plant, then that is really innovative. And it may be just the thing you need for your garden.

ANNUALS

Although coreopsis can be categorized as annual or perennial, they are included here because most people think of them as summer blooming annuals. A tremendous amount of breeding has taken place within this genus so that there are many "series" of coreopsis, each with an expanded color palette. Instead of tall yellow you can get short reds and oranges. Because some have been bred to be cold hardy it is best to look at the tag to determine if it will appear again in your garden next year.

This year, Terra Nova Nurseries is introducing Coreopsis 'Mango Punch,' the latest in their Punch series. 'Mango Punch' is Halloween, it has so much orange and red in addition to the yellow it looks more like helianthus. Hardy to zone 9, it will grow to 18 inches tall in a mounding shape. Terra Nova is also introducing the tiniest coreopsis yet, 'Little Penny.' These copper-colored flowers are as small as a penny; the plant itself grows to a 16-inch mound and are considered annuals.



Coreopsis Big Bang Series, courtesy Skagit Gardens

As for perennial coreopsis (which here can be defined as hardy to zone 4 to 5), Blooms of Bressingham is unveiling 'Golden Dream' a dwarf sport of 'Crème Brulee.' Its golden yellow flowers have frilly edges and the plant grows to 12 inches. Sunny Border Nurseries is marketing yet another sport of 'Crème Brulee,' 'Sienna Sunset,' which has large burnt sienna flowers that lighten to orange as they mature. Itsaul Plants is introducing 'Route 66,' which has burgundy red and yellow petals and the fall flowers are almost all burgundy. 'Route 66' grows to 2 feet. Darrell Probst has been working on his Big Bang

series of coreopsis, which include 'Full Moon,' 'Galaxy,' 'Cosmic Eye,' and 'Redshift.' The Big Bang series has either clear yellow or reds and yellows, but all are bred to be cold hardy.

Another breeding breakthrough has occurred with an old fashioned annual, Sweet Alyssum. Proven Winners is marketing Lobularia 'Snow Princess,' a sterile form of Sweet Alyssum, which means the plant's energy will go into flowering all summer long, not setting seed. For the gardener, this means that 'Snow Princess' will provide a mound of small white flowers until frost, reaching about 8 to 12 inches tall. 'Snow Princess' can function as a border plant in the front of garden or as a spiller in a container.

Cosmos are easy-to-grow annuals that bloom all summer long. Usually the flowers are a flat daisy shape of eight petals on tall, wiry stems, about 3 feet tall. This year, Thompson & Morgan (T&M) is showing off a completely different looking cosmos called 'Double Click Snow Puff.' Its many white petals are narrower, more fluted than flat, making it look like a chrysanthemum. Other T&M introductions include a semi-double picotee, white petals outlined in purple, called Cosmos 'Sweet Sixteen,' and 'Rubenza,' a flat daisy shape with a yellow center and dark ruby red petals that change to old rose red as they mature.

PERENNIALS

Brightly colored groundcovers are a perfect choice for shade, and Ajuga 'Sparkler' fits the bill. Introduced by Terra Nova, 'Sparkler' is a variegated ajuga with dark green shiny leaves covered in creamy white splashes. Although it is most often used as a groundcover, reaching only a foot high, it can be used in containers or as an edging for the border. Hardy to zone 6, 'Sparkler' is primarily grown for its foliage but it has been known to bloom blue flowers in the spring.



Leucanthemum 'Banana Cream' courtesy Novalis

Novalis' Plants That Work® is offering the best mildew resistant phlox to date. The Candy Store series of hardy phlox will bloom all summer long in four colors: 'Coral Crème Drop,' 'Cotton Candy,' 'Bubblegum Pink,' and 'Grape Lollipop.' These full sun perennials are hardy to zone 4, reach 2 to 3 feet, and attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

Most leucanthemums, also known as shasta daisies, have white petals and yellow centers but Novalis' 'Banana Cream' offers more yellow than white. The buds are yellow, opening in a yellow shade, but then the petals transform to white with yellow centers. Considered the darkest yellow to date, Leucanthemum superbum 'Banana Cream' will bloom all summer long. It is relatively compact at 15 inches with disease-free green foliage.

Itsaul Plants is proud to announce a variegated form of river oats, a native grass called Chasmanthium 'River Mist.' Not only are the blades of grass white and green but the seed heads themselves are white, which really lighten up shady areas. Hardy to zone 4, this 3-foot-tall clump bears the white seed heads on long filaments that sway down and make a strong rustling noise in the wind.

SHRUBS

Every year, new hydrangeas appear on the market making it impossible to list them all. However, the two most interesting breakthroughs are from the Proven Winners Color Choice Shrub program: Hydrangea arborescens 'Invincibelle Spirit' and H. arborescens 'Incrediball.' If you have grown H. arborescens 'Annabelle,' a reliable favorite, you will appreciate these two new cultivars. Instead of the plain vanilla color of 'Annabelle,' 'Invincibelle Spirit' is the first pink flowered mophead form of H. arborescens. Blooms are 6 to 8 inches across on a 3 to 4 foot shrub. To celebrate this new color, Proven Winners will donate a dollar from the purchase of every 'Invincibelle Spirit' to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

The other breakthrough is size; 'Incrediball' is a magnified 'Annabelle' mophead. Each 'Incrediball' has flower heads up to 12 inches across, beefed up stems to hold the weight, and more flower heads per bush. Unlike 'Annabelle,' these soccer ball flowers are not supposed to flop down to the ground, especially after heavy rains. Both of these native shrubs bloom all summer long and can be used as cut flowers.



Hydrangea arborescens 'Invincible Spirit,' courtesy Proven Winners Color Choice

I am including Camellia sasanqua 'Marge Miller' under the shrubs category because most camellias are evergreen shrubs, about 5 feet tall. However, 'Marge Miller,' a Monrovia introduction, is the first prostrate camellia. It still has the signature glossy green foliage and fall blooming pink flowers, but it only grows about 2 to 3 feet high. This camellia can be used as a groundcover, flowing over walls; as a spiller in containers and hanging baskets; or it can be trained on a stake to cascade down as a weeping form.

Mahonia eurybracteata 'Soft Caress' is unlike any mahonia you have ever seen. Instead of coarse, large, spiny leaves, 'Soft Caress' has long, thin leaves, similar to bamboo. Marketed through Novalis' Plants That Work®, this evergreen shrub is hardy to zone 7, prefers part shade, and grows to 3 to 4 feet. It is the perfect complement to Asian gardens and provides winter interest. Like other mahonias, the flowers are racemes of yellow flowers on top of the foliage, appearing from November through January followed by small blue berries.

Novalis also offers the first variegated bush honeysuckle. Diervilla sessilifolia 'Cool Splash' is a green/cream deciduous shrub that prefers part shade and is excellent for woodland settings. It forms underground suckers which grow into shrubs, thus developing colonies of bushes over time. In the spring, panicles of yellow trumpets bloom over the variegation, creating a yellow, green, cream effect.

TREES

Crabapples are common trees, usually upright—as tall as the house. Bailey Nurseries is introducing a petite crabapple in a weeping form. Topping out at 10 feet, First Editions' 'Ruby Tears' has naturally weeping branches loaded with pink flowers in the spring. The leaves appear as burgundy and fade to green in the summer. Fruit are dark red, less than half an inch.

Another common tree is the southern magnolia, Magnolia grandiflora. Its evergreen stature looms over houses to provide shade in both summer and winter. Its large, creamy white flowers are so sweetly scented that a bowl full of blossoms will permeate an entire room. Although we may covet one in our own backyard, many of us live on lots too small. Monrovia has solved the problem by introducing Magnolia 'Baby Grand,' a dwarf magnolia with a very round form. Unlike the species, which will grow up to 80 feet, 'Baby Grand' grows 10 to 12 feet high and wide and can be used as single specimen or as a hedge. Hardy to zone 7, 'Baby Grand' produces the same creamy white flowers in spring and summer.

Peggy Riccio is a Contributing Editor for ChesapeakeHome. These plants should be available at your local garden centers this coming summer. If you cannot find a specific plant, check out the "resources" below—most of the websites have databases that list local retailers by zip code.

Resources:

Bailey Nurseries: baileynurseries.com or 800-829-8898
Blooms of Bressingham: blooms-online.com
Darrell Probst: 978-249-3863
Itsaul Plants: itsaulplants.com or 888-448-7285
Monrovia: monrovia.com
Novalis: novalis.com or 888-845-1988
Proven Winners: provenwinners.com or 877-865-5818
Skagit Gardens: skagitgardens.com or 800-334-1719
Sunny Border Nurseries: sunnyborder.com or 800-732-1627
Terra Nova Nurseries: terranovanurseries.com or 800-215-9450
Thompson & Morgan: tmseeds.com or 732-363-2225

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