

**NEWS: PASSION STILL BURNS IN STEELERS' OLD-TIMERS SPORTS**

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# Life

# home & garden

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# GEORGE WEIGEL OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

PART 3 OF A 4-PART SERIES



YELLOW ZINNIA

## Perennials add 'wow appeal' to landscape

Today's Part 3 of our best-new-plants-of-2009 series focuses on promising new perennials — the ones that come back year after year (at least in theory).

Most of these varieties will be available in local garden centers this spring. If your favorite place doesn't have them, ask and the staff might be able to get them.

Check out these:

### COREOPSIS 'REDSHIFT.'

This 30-inch sun lover with the frilly leaves has larger-than-average flowers that start out rich red and mature to a yellow/cream/red blend.

"We got some plugs of this last year, and they sold like hot-cakes," says Fred McCoy, Ashcombe Farm & Greenhouses' perennial grower who lists "Red Shift" as his favorite '09 newcomer. "The flowers truly are as described and don't need the cool of fall to exhibit the [color] shift."

McCoy also likes the plant's sturdy stems.

### PRAIRIE DROPSEED (SPOROBOLUS HETEROLEPIS).

It's not brand new to the trade, but Highland Gardens manager Erica Beadle names this native ornamental grass as her favorite addition to Highland's 2009 perennial lineup.

"I love this grass!" she says. "It has soft, wispy plumes with a fountainlike display. The foliage turns gold-orange in autumn. And it's very drought-tolerant."

Prairie dropseed grows about 3 feet tall — ideally in full sun — and has a mild cilantro scent in fall.

### 'FRUIT PUNCH' DIANTHUS.

Gina Martin at Stauffers of Kissel Hill garden centers likes this new series of sun-loving shorties for their fragrance, double petals and unusual colors.

"Apple Slice" is 10 inches tall with red flowers blotched in pale-pink or white.



### PICK YOUR GARDEN'S PERFECT PERENNIALS

Other perennials worth considering for your 2009 gardens:

■ **GOLDENROD "LITTLE LEMON."** A dwarf version of our fall-blooming native goldenrod, growing only 15 inches tall and flowering heavy in gold.

■ **FOAMFLOWERS "RIVER" SERIES.** Bred by Sinclair Adams in Coatesville, this new 5-plant series with Pennsylvania river names ("Susquehanna," "Delaware," "Octoraro," etc.) comes in a range of beautiful leaf colors on ground-hugging, shade-preferring, native plants.

■ **CONEFLOWER "MERINGUE."** A compact, 20-inch coneflower with creamy-yellow double flowers and white perimeter petals.

■ **CONEFLOWER "HOT PAPAYA."** The first double-petaled orange coneflower. Looks like an orange pincushion with an orange skirt.

■ **HAKONE GRASS "BENI KAZI."** A shade-tolerant, arching Japanese forest grass that turns from green to red in fall.

**DETAILS:** If you can't find new introductions locally, try the Mailorder Gardening Association's Web site at [www.mailordergardening.com](http://www.mailordergardening.com) for additional online and mail-order plant vendors.

# FENCE: Color yard with beautiful perennials

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"Coconut Punch" is 12 inches tall with bicolor red and white flowers. And "Pomegranate Kiss" is only 6 inches tall with serrated red flowers streaked in pink.

**AGASTACHE "SUMMER GLOW."** The breakthrough in this long-blooming perennial is the pale-yellow flower petals with the dark bases.

"No other cultivar has this color," says Bryce Davis Sr., owner of Davis Florist and Garden Center/The

Plant Place. "What I like about it is the plant is highly drought-tolerant, has no known disease or insect problems and tolerates not only heat, but areas that receive summer water. To top it off, it's highly attractive to hummingbirds and makes a great cut-flower filler."

**HEUCHERA "GEORGIA PEACH."** Light up the shade with this new foot-tall native coralbell that's a 2009 favorite of Bryan Benner, perennial grower at Quality Greenhouses near Dillsburg.

"It's got beautiful large, peach-colored leaves," says Benner, adding that it's also been bred for heat and humidity, a big plus in our brutal summers.

Like most coralbells, "Georgia Peach" will hold its leaves through most winters, too, taking on a more intense rose-purple color in cold weather.

**CONEFLOWERS "MAC 'N' CHEESE" AND "TOMATO SOUP."** These are the latest, greatest and brightest colors yet in cone-flowers: bright red and

bright yellow.

"Those are comfort foods, and these are comfort plants," says Dan Heims, president of Terra Nova Nurseries, the Oregon grower introducing "Mac 'n' Cheese" and "Tomato Soup."

Heims says these two hold their warm colors well, bloom over an unusually long period and have sturdy stems and a compact size around 2 feet tall.

**PHLOX "PEPPER-MINT TWIST."** As you might guess, this is a pink-and-white bicolor flower

that David Wilson of Garden Splendor Plants says has a lot of "wow appeal."

It grows about 16 inches tall, flowers in midsummer and does best in full sun.

Wilson says "Peppermint Twist" also looks to be good at fighting off the bane of tall garden phlox — powdery mildew leaf disease that turns the leaves white and then brown.

"We have seen precious little mildew, so I think this has at least good resistance," he says.

Occasionally, some of the flowers of this hybrid revert back to pure pink.

**HELIOPSIS "TUSCAN SUN."** Also known as "false sunflowers," heliopsis make one of the best late-season shows with their big, bright, golden, daisylike flowers. But not everyone likes their 3- to 4-foot height.

"Tuscan Sun" solves that by delivering the same mass of bright flowers on compact plants that grow only 15 to 20 inches tall.

This new Proven Winners introduction also is heat- and drought-tolerant and loves full-sun spots.

**Next Thursday:** The best new trees, shrubs and roses of 2009.

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# SICK: You can clear the air in your home

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## Stop polluting

First, identify and control sources of pollution to reduce and prevent indoor air contamination. This can range from changing house-cleaning products to airing out freshly dry-cleaned clothing to tossing out formaldehyde-containing furniture.

## Improve ventilation

Proper ventilation — the mixing of indoor air with outdoor air — can revitalize the air in your home and protect your health.

should be used wherever moisture and combustion are present in the bathroom, laundry and kitchen. A bath fan, for example, will help to dissipate chloroform gas, which is a byproduct of chlorinated water. It also will remove excess moisture that can lead to mold, which can produce more health hazards.

## Smoke it out

Fireplaces and other fuel-burning appliances (water heaters, furnaces, stoves, etc.) should be properly adjusted and vented to the exterior. Doing so will prevent

of the appliance.

## Test it

Do-it-yourself test kits are available for many indoor air pollutants such as lead or radon. Other indoor pollutants such as asbestos require professional testing.

Asbestos or lead should not be scraped or sanded and should be removed only by a professional abatement contractor. Moreover, testing should be performed after the abatement process to ensure the air quality is safe.

Radon is a naturally oc-

curing gas that is derived from uranium in the ground. Radon can make its way into a home through cracks in foundation or basement walls. Small amounts of radon can be controlled by sealing cracks with a caulking or patching compound. Higher levels might require the installation of an exhaust system to disperse concentrated amounts into outdoor air.

In either case, if you suspect your home contains more than its share of pollutants, we suggest that you have your home tested by a pro.