

THE ART & SCIENCE OF SMART GARDENING

# Horticulture

**ECHINACEA FOR LATE SUMMER COLOR**

**10 GREAT LOW-WATER PLANTS | BEST PERENNIALS FOR BUTTERFLIES**

**THE SIMPLE ROSE GARDEN**

**HOW TO STAKE PLANTS**



**PLUS** design lessons:  
inside 2 gorgeous gardens

# Contents

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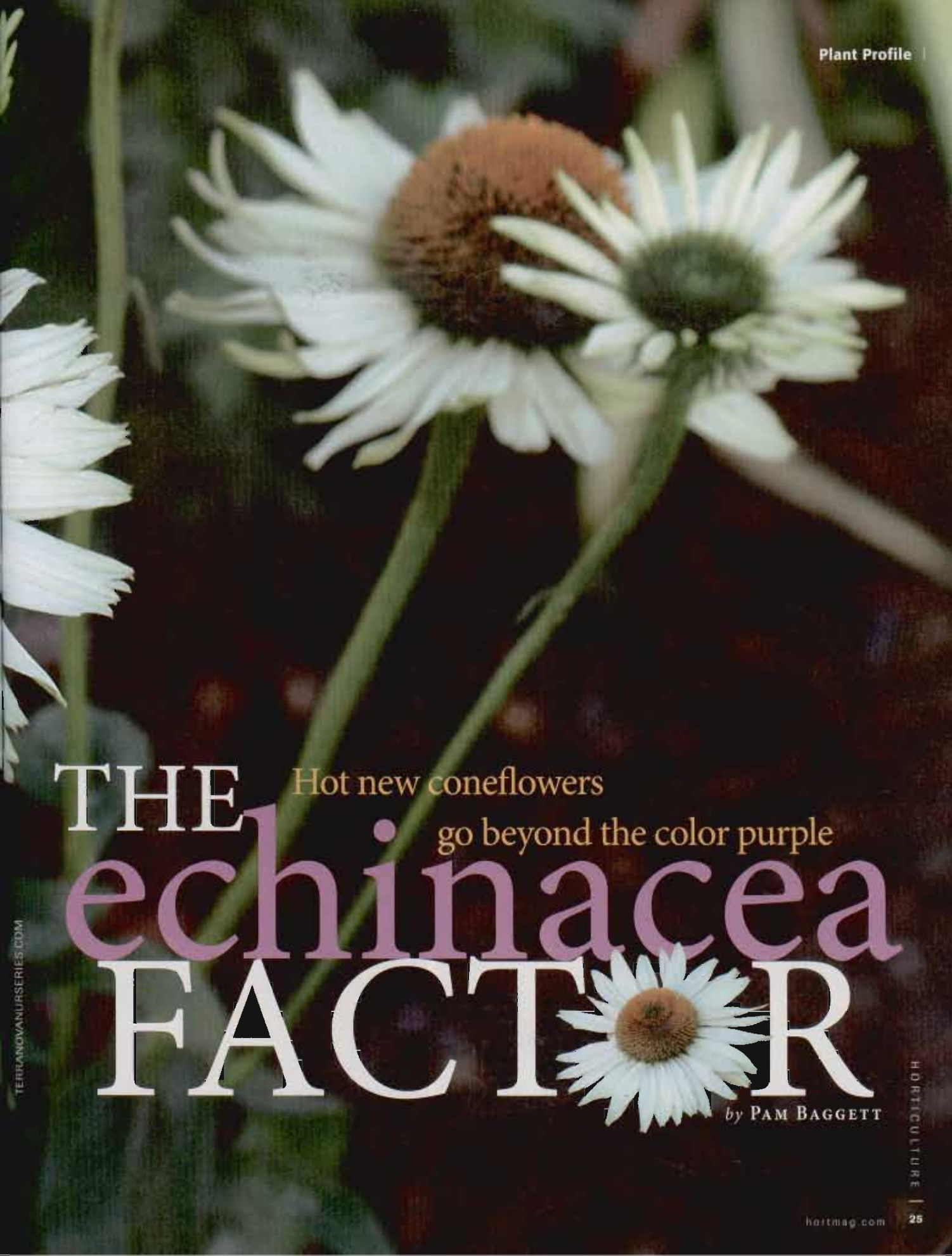
## Features

- Plant Profile**  
24 **THE ECHINACEA FACTOR**  
Hot new coneflowers go beyond the color purple  
*by Pam Baggett*
- Garden Visit**  
30 **A NATURAL FIT**  
Plants root a modern house to its woodland setting  
*by Valerie Easton*
- Plant Profile**  
38 **FUSS-FREE ROSES**  
Simplify summer rose care with these reliable varieties  
*by Page Dickey*
- Garden Visit**  
44 **A TRAVELER'S GARDEN**  
Design ideas and must-have plants are souvenirs to savor  
*by Nan Sinton & David Michener*
- Plant Profile**  
50 **MARVELOUS MILKWEEDS**  
Not all milkweeds deserve the group's bad rap  
*by Ellen Homig*



*Echinacea* 'Fragrant Angel'





THE Hot new coneflowers  
go beyond the color purple  
**echinacea**  
FACT  R  
by PAM BAGGETT

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HORTICULTURE |

**U**NLESS YOU PULLED A MINI RIP VAN WINKLE over the last four years, you've watched a revolution take place in the genus *Echinacea*. We now enjoy orange and peach petals, sweet fragrance and more. From where did these extreme echinaceas come? Here's a brief history.

*Echinacea purpurea*, the purple coneflower, was recognized as a top-10 perennial a couple decades ago. Eager gardeners then began the search for other appealing native coneflowers. Gold-flowered *E. paradoxa* was the biggest surprise, but we also flocked to fluttery-petaled pale purple *E. pallida*, and similar-looking *E. angustifolia*.

With a golden coneflower in the picture, it's little wonder that enterprising plant breeders envisioned a brave new world for echinaceas. Yet surprisingly, Richard Saul, co-introducer of the Big Sky Echinacea series, had something other than colorful hybrids in mind when he first began making crosses in the mid-1990s. Richard and his brother Bobby, co-owners of Itsaul Plants in Atlanta, Georgia, were annoyed by winter losses among their container-grown purple coneflower. They

made it their mission to transfer golden coneflower's tolerance for winter's temperature fluctuations and moisture into their purple coneflower stock. Richard shared seeds of his original crosses with Tony Avent, owner of Plant Delights Nursery, who was started to find a lemon-yellow coneflower (later introduced as *E. 'Paranoia'*) among his seedlings. Hearing the news, the brothers abandoned container-hardiness as a breeding goal and focused on creating new coneflower colors.

Dr. Jim Ault, Director of Environmental Horticulture at the Chicago Botanic Garden in Illinois, also initiated an echinacea breeding program in the mid-90s, with the goal of producing floriferous interspecies crosses in novel shades. Ault hoped to endow his hybrids with increased drought and cold tolerance that would lead to greater longevity in the upper Midwest.



*Echinacea 'Kim's Knee High'*



*Echinacea 'Big Sky'*

# AT A GLANCE: COLORFUL CONEFLOWERS

NAME	BREEDER	HEIGHT	FLOWER COLOR
'Sunrise'	Itsaul Plants	24 in.	Pale yellow
Harvest Moon ('Matthew Saul')	Itsaul Plants	30 in.	Gold aging to creamy yellow
Sundown ('Evan Saul')	Itsaul Plants	40 in.	Orange petals with raspberry undersides that fade to orange-pink
Twilight	Itsaul Plants	24 in.	Rose and orange
After Midnight ('Emily Saul')	Itsaul Plants	12 in.	Magenta petals and dark red cones
Summer Sky ('Katie Saul')	Itsaul Plants	36 in.	Blend of pale orange and dark pink
Mango Meadowbrite ('CBG Cone3')	Dr. Jim Ault	30 in.	Orange fading to bright yellow
Pixie Meadowbrite ('CBG Cone2')	Dr. Jim Ault	18 in.	Purple
'Fancy Frills'	Dan Heims	24 in.	Medium pink
'Lilliput'	Dan Heims	15 in.	Vivid pink
'Merlot'	Dan Heims	34 in.	Magenta-purple
'Tiki Torch'	Dan Heims	24 in.	Golden orange



## HARD WORK PAYS OFF

Fast-forward to 2004, when Ault and the Saul brothers rocked the gardening world with echinaceas in never-before-seen colors. Ault introduced Orange Meadowbrite ('Art's Pride') which grows to 30 inches tall and produces electric red-orange blossoms with slim reflexed petals that suggest *E. angustifolia* or *E. pallida* heritage. Richard and Bobby Saul brought to market the first of their Big Sky Echinacea series: soft yellow Sunrise, which bears pale lemon-frosting petals and the terra-cotta pink Sunset. (See At a Glance: Colorful Coneflowers, for more varieties from these two growers.)

Improved purple coneflowers have hit the market, too, with dazzling cultivars coming from both American and European growers. In Oregon, plant breeder and nursery owner Dan Heims is striving for plants with strong side branching, high bud count, delectable fragrance and overlapping petals that cure the gap-toothed look of many echinacea selections.

Heims considers *E.* 'Ruby Giant', a clonal selection made from the seed strain 'Rubinstern', the epicenter of his breeding program. It's a formidable three-foot-tall plant whose five-inch flat-faced blooms bear a double row of rich magenta-rose petals. His 'Fragrant Angel' is the best white-petaled echinacea available, with honey-sweet five-inch flowers on three-foot stems. *Echinacea purpurea* 'Hope' bears soft pink blooms and has the distinction of being part of the "Plant for the Cure"

program sponsored by the Susan B. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation ([komen.org](http://komen.org)).

#### EUROPEAN INTRODUCTIONS

*Echinacea purpurea* 'Pink Double Delight', from the Netherlands, bears a single row of bubblegum pink petals surrounding a cone packed with starry blossoms of deeper foxglove pink. It's a magnificent selection, two feet tall and extremely floriferous, with flowers appearing from early summer until frost. The 26-inch-tall 'Fatal Attraction', introduced by famed Dutch plantsman Piet Oudolf, is a zesty magenta-purple cultivar with inky black stems. The British introduction 'Elton Knight' pro-

duces a strong-stemmed 20-inch plant with saturated raspberry-mauve blossoms. Its exceptional form and color have earned it the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit. Nearly three-foot-tall *E. purpurea* 'Vintage Wine', another Oudolf selection, also has excellent color saturation but with a difference: it bears one-inch magenta-purple petals held horizontally, surrounding a flaming orange two-inch cone. It's a fun new look for echinaceas, which typically bear petals much bigger than their cones.



Recent breeding programs have produced exciting Echinaceas, such as orange 'Tiki Torch' (below) and frilled 'Pink Double Delight' (right).



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#### WHAT LIES AHEAD

Jim Ault is directing his efforts toward developing colorful coneflowers that share the compact habit and ultra-tough, repeat-flowering characteristics of Pixie Meadowbrite ('CBG Cone2'). He's evaluating several hybrids for possible introduction in 2009, plants that would address the nursery industry's concern with lanky cultivars that break during shipping. The Saul brothers share similar goals—they're lining up a new series that offers stockier plants with multiple side shoots and summer-to-frost bloom. And all of the breeders hope to solve the one unfortunate drawback of these great new colors: their tendency to fade quickly in heat. (Tip: Frequent deadheading promotes fresh vibrant blooms.)

Echinacea breeders agree that this is just the first wave of excitement and predict that a decade from now we'll enjoy even better coneflowers based on these early introductions. In the meantime, Ault suggests that home gardeners join the fun by planting a mix of new cultivars and seeing what seedlings emerge. Not bound by the restrictions of producing shorter plants that ship well in pots, you may develop a towering strain of intensely fragrant, 40-inch-tall Echinaceas with overlapping, nonfading, hot orange petals. And that would be cool, in the extreme. ■



We list as many mail-order companies as possible. If you're searching for a specific plant, we recommend *Andersen Horticultural Library's Source List of Plants and Seeds* (952-443-1405; <http://plantinfo.umn.edu>) or going online to Google ([google.com](http://google.com)). **Contact information appears in the first mention of each nursery.**

**Plant This, page 17**

**AVANT GARDENS**  
710 High Hill Rd.  
Dartmouth MA 02747  
508-998-8819  
[avantgardensne.com](http://avantgardensne.com)  
*Vernonia noveboracensis*

**Fresh Picked, page 20**

**OIKOS TREE CROPS**  
PO Box 19425  
Kalamazoo MI 40019  
269-624-6233  
[oikostreecrops.com](http://oikostreecrops.com)  
*Asparagus officinalis*

**If I Could Have Only 4, page 22**

**AVANT GARDENS**  
*Clerodendrum ugandense*  
'Blue Wings'

**NICHE GARDENS**  
1111 Dawson Rd.  
Chapel Hill NC 27516  
919-967-0078  
[nichegardens.com](http://nichegardens.com)  
*Salvia splendens* 'Van Houttei'

**YUCCA DO**  
PO Box 907  
Hempstead TX 77445  
979-826-4580  
[yuccado.com](http://yuccado.com)  
*Polianthes tuberosa*

We could not find a source for *Setaria palmata*.

**The Echinacea Factor, page 24**

**BLUESTONE PERENNIALS**  
7211 Middle Ridge  
Madison OH 44057  
800-852-3243  
[bluestoneperennials.com](http://bluestoneperennials.com)

*Echinacea purpurea* 'Rubinstern'

**GARDEN CROSSINGS**  
4902 96th Ave.  
Zeeland MI 49464  
616-875-5262  
[gardencrossings.com](http://gardencrossings.com)  
*Echinacea purpurea* 'Merlot',  
*E. p.* 'Tiki Torch'

**LEE'S GARDENS**  
25986 Sauder Rd.  
Tremont IL 61568  
309-925-5262  
[www.leesgardens.com](http://www.leesgardens.com)  
*Echinacea purpurea* 'Fancy Frills',  
*E.* 'Fragrant Angel'

**MORNING SKY GREENERY**  
44804 East Highway 28  
Morris MN 56267  
320-795-6234  
[morningskygreenery.com](http://morningskygreenery.com)  
*Echinacea angustifolia*, *E. pallida*

**NICHE GARDENS**  
*E. paradoxa*, *E. tennesseensis*, *E.*  
*x* 'Twilight'

**ROOTS AND RHIZOMES**

PO Box 9  
Randolph WI 53956  
800-374-5035  
[rootsrhizomes.com](http://rootsrhizomes.com)  
*Echinacea purpurea* After Midnight  
(Emily Saul), *E. p.* 'Fatal Attraction',  
*E. p.* Harvest Moon (Matthew Saul),  
*E. p.* 'Hope', *E. p.* 'Lilliput', *E. p.*  
Mango Meadowbrite (CBG Cone3),  
*E. p.* 'Pink Double Delight',  
*E. p.* Pixie Meadowwhite (CBG Cone2),  
*E. p.* 'Ruby Giant', *E. p.* Summer Sky  
(Kate Saul), *E. p.* Sundown (Evan Saul),  
*E. p.* 'Sunrise', *E. p.* 'Vintage Wine'



p. 29

**No Fuss Roses, page 38**  
**GREENMANTLE NURSERY**  
3010 Ettersburg Rd.  
Garberville CA 95542  
707-986-7504  
[greenmantlenursery.com](http://greenmantlenursery.com)  
*Rosa dupontii*, *R. moyesii*, *R. pomifera*,  
*R. rugosa*, *R. spinosissima*

**SHOOTING STAR NURSERY**  
160 Spards Rd.  
Georgetown KY 40324  
502-867-7979  
[shootingstarnursery.com](http://shootingstarnursery.com)  
*Rosa setigera*

**Marvelous Milkweeds, page 50**

**DOYLE FARM NURSERY**  
158 Norris Rd.  
Delta PA 17314  
717-862-3134  
[doylefarm.com/index.html](http://doylefarm.com/index.html)  
*Asclepias syriaca* (*syriacus*),

*A. verticillata*  
**SENECA HILL PERENNIALS**  
3712 County Rt. 57  
Oswego NY 13126  
315-342-5915  
[senecahillperennials.com](http://senecahillperennials.com)  
*Asclepias asperula*, *A. exaltata*,  
*A. hirtella*, *A. latifolia*, *A. purpurascens*,  
*A. speciosa* 'Davis',  
*A. tuberosa*

**Collector's Choice, page 63**  
**FORESTFARM**  
990 Tetherow Rd.  
Williams OR 97544-9599  
541-848-7269  
[forestfarm.com](http://forestfarm.com)  
*Buckleya rufifolia*, *B. colvisei*,  
*B. davidii*, *B. globosa*,  
*B. nivea*