



Scadoxus puniceus
PHOTO COURTESY OF LANCE WRIGHT



Mike Darcy

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Inspiration in other gardens

WHENEVER I VISIT other people's gardens, particularly at the start of the year, the conversation often turns to two questions. What new plants I am going to buy? And what were my favorite plants of the past season?

I do not really have favorite plants for a season, but I might have a favorite plant on a particular day and at a particular time.

It intrigues me to hear about plants that other gardeners are growing, especially if they are new to me. I also enjoy hearing people talk about a relatively well-known plant that might be used in a way that I had not contemplated.

For more perspective, I asked three Oregon gardeners to discuss some plants that have been outstanding performers this year. Having visited their homes, I know these gardeners are passionate about plants and are always on the lookout for new things. Sometimes the new plants prove to be successful and sometimes not.

My goal is to generate interest in new plants that might be relatively unknown to many, but deserve to be more widely planted. Perhaps this discussion will intrigue additional gardens and they will ask their local garden centers to stock these plants.

Dave Eckerdt and his wife Pat live and garden in Salem. I have heard them refer to their garden as a “collector's garden” and I most certainly agree. They are active in the local horticulture community in Salem and Portland, and Dave is the current president of the Salem Hardy Plant Society.

“Pat and I don't have a most wanted list,” he stated. “Our plant acquisition program is driven by targets of opportunity. It

is less fun to go to a nursery looking for a particular plant, because either they have it or they don't. We go shopping with few expectations. Our attention may be drawn to an unknown species, a particularly handsome specimen, or a well-written hang tag.”

Last year, Dave and Pat encountered *Globularia sarcophylla* ‘Blue Eyes’.

“This sun-loving perennial has stiff, meaty leaves spiraling about its woody central stems,” he stated. “Tight cobalt blue buds open in late spring forming white buttons with a purplish-blue eye. The plant will grow to two feet tall and wide, and is tough enough to grow down to zone 4. This hybrid comes to us through the Huntington Botanic Garden and, like our adopted cat, has unknown parentage.”



Globularia sarcophylla ‘Blue Eyes’
PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVE ECKERDT

For his second selection, Dave chose *Sanguisorba hakusanensis* ‘Lilac Squirrel’. “Both the name and the plant make me smile,” he stated. “We found a sunny spot near a birdbath to give the plant the warmth and moisture it wants. Our one gallon plant produced three foot-tall stems with dangling pink feather duster flowers, each lasting several weeks.”

When **Lance Wright** worked for Portland Parks & Recreation, he was responsible for the parks in downtown Portland. I was particularly impressed with some of the plantings he used in flower beds throughout the Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Lance and his wife, Julie, live in Southeast Portland. Since his retirement he has remained very active in the horticulture community. Lance could not choose just one or two plants from his list, so he asked me to decide which of his favorites to highlight. They were all good options. Coincidentally, one of Lance's selections was the same as Dave Eckerdt's, and that was *Sanquisorba hakusanensis*.

Romneya coulteri, was one of his favorites. “I love this plant,” he stated. “It has gorgeous huge flowers and beautiful glaucous foliage. It is a tough, consistent performer along the West Coast, if it likes its site.” It likes good drainage and full sun best.

Scadoxus puniceus was another one of his picks. “(It's) a sun loving Amaryllis relative that I have an affinity for,” he stated. “I love the stem and leaf structure of this plant as well as the speckling on the stem. The second year of blooming shows a substantial increase in flowers. The plant appears to be hardy in our area.”

John Reed and his wife, Marilyn, live and garden in West Linn. John said that he got a late start this past spring. “However, I did decide to trial some of the newer *Lantana camara* strains and was very impressed,” he stated. “I tried basic





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WHAT I'M HEARING



Lantana many years ago, but they always seemed to be leggy and a bit stingy with the blooms. But these new strains (Proven Winners has a dozen or so) did amazingly well, outperforming most common container fillers such as petunias. They were always in bloom, never had any aphid or other pest issues, tolerated the extreme heat and lasted long after the cold fall had hit other bloomers.

"I just wish garden centers carried more of the available strains! I really think these should be a staple of the bedding plant palette for our region."

While *Hosta* has been a standard garden plant for many years, new varieties are appearing and this genus is becoming very popular. "We expanded our collection of dwarf and miniature hostas this year, to about 30 different varieties," John wrote. "There are so many beautiful and interesting forms now, and with Sebright Gardens introducing new varieties, it makes it easy to obtain them."

"We also have attained some from local nurseries and mail order specialists. Our garden includes more and more hostas every year because there are so many gorgeous new selections, amazing forms and colors. In addition, many of them look great way into fall, rather than fading out in late summer."

Hopefully this discussion will encourage our retail garden centers to strive to obtain new plants so that the home gardener can continue to shop locally for the new and the unusual. Novelty always attracts a crowd.

Also, do not forget about some of the tried and true plants such as *Lantana* and *Hosta*. They may have been around for a long time, but new varieties are constantly being introduced to make our choices even more difficult. It is imperative that local garden centers continue to increase the difficulty of our plant selections so that customers will return frequently and bring friends with them. Newness, just like the new year, is exciting and never wears off. ☺



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