

## New and Unusual Perennials at Bluebird Nursery

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I would like to start by introducing one of the most ancient seed producing plants that we grow.

***Ephedra minuta*** (miniature joint fir) forms a dense mound of leafless blue-green stems to 10 inches and prefers well drained sites and full sun. It is hardy in Nebraska, with no winter protection. Zone 4/5.

***Dianthus* 'Dale Lindgren'** is a sport of *D.* 'Prairie Pink', and is named in honor of Dale Lindgren of the University of Nebraska. It has 18-inch stems, blue-green foliage, and delicate pink semidouble flowers all season. Zone 5.

***Clematis fremontii*** (Fremont's crowfoot) has stout erect stems to 2 ft supporting lavender-purple bell flowers. It is a summer bloomer, native to the plains states. Zone 4.

***Clematis fruticosa*** (Mongolian gold) is a shrub reaching 3½ ft tall. It's native to Inner Mongolia, and has yellow flowers in the summer and persistent seed heads in late summer to fall. It is a 1999 Great Plant for the Great Plains winner.

***Spiranthes cernua*** (ladies' tresses) is a U.S. native found from the Plains States to the East Coast, preferring damp organic soils. Diminutive plants form spires of porcelain white sweet-scented flowers in the late summer. It can be grown from seed using standard laboratory techniques for orchid seed culture or grown vegetatively. It forms advantageous shoots on the root tips.

***Geranium* ×*cantabrigiense* 'Karmina'** has 1-ft mounds of fragrant stems and leaves covered by intense pink flowers in the early summer and sporadically thereafter. The foliage turns to shades of red during the cooler weather of fall.

***Penstemon* 'Mexicale', Pikes Peak Purple™ penstemon** is an interspecies hybrid by Bruce Meyers. It has narrow dark green leaves that form attractive mounds to 15 inches and has violet-purple flowers. It is Zone 4b, and a 1999 Plant Select®.

***Hibiscus* Baltimore hybrids** range from white to red, are 4 to 6 ft tall, and have flowers ranging in size from 6 to 10 inches in diameter. We have made a seedling selection with intense pink flowers and small red eye, 10 inches in diameter.

***Aster alpinus* 'Cotton Candy'** has double pink flowers, and is a seedling selection of *A. alpinus* 'Marchenland'. It forms 12-inch plants and is an early to mid summer bloomer.

***Aster fendleri* 'My Antonia'** has pure white flowers with yellow centers in mid to late summer. The 12-inch plants have glossy dark green leaves. It is a 1999 Great Plants for the Great Plains winner. Zone 4.

**×*Pardancanda norrisii* hybrids**, through the last 15 years of hybridizing and selection, several new seed strains and clones have been made over the last several years.

×*Pardancanda norrisii* ‘**Sangria**’ is an 18-inch plant with heavier, slightly twisted foliage and increased flower count and size. The flower color is an interesting blend of purples with a touch of gold in the sepals.

×*Pardancanda Dazzler Series* is a seedling strain very similar to ‘Sangria’ in plant and flowering habit. It grows 12 to 20 inches in height, with colors ranging from pinks with yellow margins, to darkest purples and near reds, very few with spotting. Another even smaller seedling strain is in the works.

*Veronica* ‘**Goodness Grows**’ is a release from Goodness Grows Nursery. Spikes of violet-blue flowers, 1 to 1½ ft tall, have an extended bloom season May through frost.

*Stokesia laevis* ‘**Mary Gregory**’ is a 2-ft plant loaded with 2-inch creamy-yellow flowers in mid summer. It is a Niche Gardens introduction.

*Rudbeckia missouriensis* (**Missouri black-eyed susan**) has 12-inch mounds of fuzzy foliage topped by bouquets of bright yellow flowers. Zone 6

*Sambucus* is a shrub that fits well into the perennial garden. The height can be reduced by cutting back the old canes in the early spring. Zone 4

*Sambucus nigra* ‘**Pulverulenta**’ has green foliage splashed with white specks, starting out nearly white in the spring.

*Sambucus nigra* ‘**Madonna**’ has bold golden margins, slightly shorter than typical *S. nigra*

*Sambucus racemosa* ‘**Plumosa Aurea**’ has finely cut leaflets that mature from bright yellow in the spring to lime green in the summer to yellow with a touch of bronze in the fall along with bright red berries.

*Ipomoea batatas*. There has been an increasing demand for tender perennials, especially the ornamental sweet potato, *I. batatas*. They make fast growing ground covers, and prefer the heat of summer to grow. Zone 10

‘Blacky’ has dark cut foliage to 10 inches tall ‘Margarita’ has chartreuse foliage, and ‘Pink Frost’ has white and green foliage with a violet-pink blush

*Lysimachia punctata* ‘**Alexanders**’ PP#10598 is a Plant Haven, England introduction. The 3-ft plants have cream-green variegated leaves that develop a pink blush during the cooler months of fall and spring. It has golden-yellow, star-shaped flowers in the leaf axils. Zone 5

*Oenothera macrocarpa* selection (possibly subsp. *oklahomensis*). This plant was found in central Oklahoma, it is vigorous and adaptable, and was found growing on an extremely poor site under drought conditions, but it was completely covered by large bright yellow flowers. Under normal garden soil conditions, it’s a little more open in habit allowing its unusual red stems to be even more obvious. Zone 4

*Callirhoe alcaeoides* ‘**Logan Calhoun**’ is 8 to 12 inches tall and up to 4 ft in diameter. This native plant is covered by sparkling white flowers throughout most of the summer, and is named in honor of the discoverer, the late Logan Calhoun. Zone 4

Due to the increasing interest in miniatures for troughs and rock gardens we are always looking for new “little jewels”. To determine the actual hardiness is very difficult since more are lost during the damp cool weather of fall and spring

*Lewisia* 'George Henley' is a typical alpine plant forming a 6-inch rosette of fleshy leaves with magenta-red flowers in midsummer. It is listed as a Zone 6 plant, but it has been persistent in my Zone 4b garden.

*Drosanthemum hispidum* is a close relative to the *Delosperma*, this miniature forms a dense clump of fleshy leaves covered nearly all summer long with purple-red flowers.

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## New and Usual Conifer Cultivars

### Jim Smith

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The term "new" is a relative one when dwarf or garden conifers are involved. When I use the term "new" it will mean popular or newly acquired by the trade, since collectors usually have this material long before it ever makes it into commercial production. Conifers for the garden can come from many sources. They can start from a graft of a witches broom, seed from a broom, a chance seedling, or a sport on a plant. The main thing to keep in mind when talking about dwarf conifers is the length of time something can be referred to as new. We all know of the work that Dr. Sidney Waxman has done at the University of Connecticut on broom seedlings. He has introduced many very nice landscape conifers to the industry. This takes quite a long time evaluating each plant to make sure it has a differing characteristic from the next one and then many more years to distribute to the trade, in some cases it can take 20 years or more. Many of these plants are first evaluated by collectors and shared or traded. Sometimes a selection can be around for many, many years before it is commercially accepted. So the word "new" is also being used as "collector new" and "industry new".

Which then brings up the classification of sizes. The American Conifer Society has established a guide to help eliminate the confusion around the term dwarf conifer. They actually prefer to use "garden conifer".

- **MINIATURE.** Grows less than 3 inches a year or will reach around 2 to 3 ft in 10 years. Example is *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana'.
- **DWARF.** Grows around 3 to 6 inches a year or will reach about 3 to 6 ft in 10 years. Example is *Pinus strobus* 'Blue Shag'.
- **INTERMEDIATE.** Will grow about 6 to 12 inches a year or will be about 6 to 15 ft in 10 years. Example is *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Gold Thread'.
- **LARGE.** Grows more than 12 inches a year and will be around 15 ft in 10 years. Example is *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca'.

Miniatures are perfect for the trough or patio garden since they will almost never outgrow the space allotted for them. Dwarfs are great in shallow borders or lower level foundation plantings. Intermediates will tend to outgrow the space if not used properly. Large should be used only as specimens or where plenty of room is given.

One thing to keep in mind when landscaping with conifers is to keep the growth rate in perspective. By using the proper plant in the correct location many years of enjoyment can be had.