

# Colorado State University



### From the Gardens...



Hello again, horticulture friends. How is it that we are now after Thanksgiving?! The season sure did fly by. Hard to believe I've almost got one whole year under the belt. We've had some above average temperatures over the last week or so, quite enjoyable in fact. It has made raking leaves in my home yard a pleasure.

The below freezing weather for a few days right before Halloween, and our first snowfall, the gardens brought an end to all the annuals in the gardens. The crew has been removing all the plant materials and getting the things set for the winter. It is such a different view walking through the gardens, with bare beds. The 2023 Annual Report is finished and will be published and shared with you this week, so check

your email!

Members of the Trial Garden Subcommittee met last week, to discuss the latest class of perennial trials to discuss and determine the "Top Performers" from the 2021 class. The Top Performer Perennials are below. There are some great plants in the mix! We are working on finalizing the perennial trial report, and that should be ready to publish and share in early December. As noted in the previous newsletter, there will be no Cool Season Trials this year.

As we come to a close on this trial season and wrap up and publish the reports, our attention will quickly shift towards the 2024 trial season. I want to recognize the students who have put in countless hours over the summer and the semesters. Thanks to Tate Erickson for his work as the Annual Trial Garden Coordinator for the last couple of seasons and thanks to Ian McClellan for his work as the perennial trial coordinator. Both will graduate in December.

Also, thanks to the many Master Garden Volunteers for their assistance. And a hearty thank you to David Staats for all of his assistance and valuable insight and knowledge. A sincere thanks to all of the trial participants, industry stakeholders, and friends of the trial gardens who make this program possible. I look forward to the next trial season.

I wish you all a great holiday season! See you in the spring!

### 2023 "Top Performer" Winners!

The results are in and we are excited to announce the 2023 "Top Performer" Perennials! Winners of the "Top Performer" award are selected by a different process than the "Best Of" Annual winners. Since individual perennials often peak at different times of the year, evaluators meet and review photos that were taken every two weeks during the growing season for the entire trial period of two winters and three growing seasons. Data tabulated by the student coordinator throughout the season is also taken into consideration during the process. The evaluators are members from the Perennial Trial Garden subcommittee which is made up of professionals from the local Green Industry as well as staff from Colorado State University. A perennial entry is only considered for the "Top Performer" award if it has maintained superior performance in the ground for two winters and three growing seasons.

***Brunnera 'Alexandria'***

## TERRA NOVA® Nurseries

Beautiful silver cordate leaves were very attractive all growing season creating dependable; bright spot of color in shady areas. Foliage was described as having less veining, and were relatively thick giving it substance and creating a strong mat of silver leaves, great for contrasting with other plants, like darker leaved heucheras. During the early summer a delicate cloud of blue flowers creates a unique look in the garden.



***Echinacea* 'SunMagic Vintage Fuschia'**  
Flamingo Holland / Bull Breeding

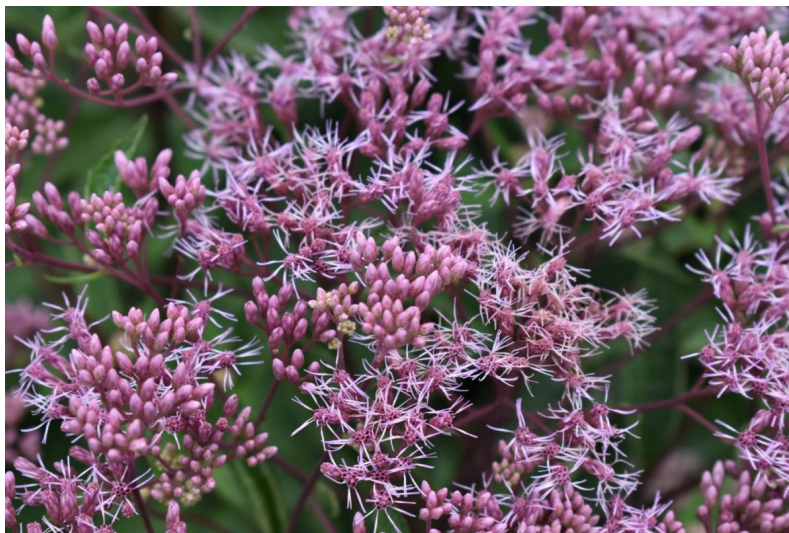
This coneflower was noted for their impressive “flower power” providing showstopping color for two solid months. The attractive lowers were a bright and intense fuchsia-pink color, with the ray flowers being held horizontal topped with an intensely colored big “Hershey Kiss cone on top”. The darker cone and dark stems made a great contrast with the bright blooms. Plants had a very uniform growth habit and showed great winter survival.



### ***Eupatorium* ‘Little-Pye’ Dümnen Orange**

“Little” is somewhat relative with this native plant! Really, only in the first year, expect this plant to be ‘little’ and short at just over a foot tall. *However, once established in the garden, one should expect ‘Little-Pye’ to grow to make a statement in the garden, reaching upwards of 6 feet tall.* So, we wouldn’t recommend putting this in the front of the border...place it somewhere where it can fill out and reach for the sky. ‘Little-Pye’ makes for a beautiful show in late summer landscape, with blooms covering the canopy at its peak. And the inflorescences remained attractive after flowering, offering winter interest or potential use as a dried flower. Plants were very uniform with strong stems that held the impressive inflorescences from lodging. There was no evidence of any disease or insect problems. All this

combined, makes the case for this plant being a low maintenance garden plant. Oh... and not to forget, this was a bee-magnet...They loved it!



### **Heuchera 'Big Top Caramel Apple' from Darwin Perennials**

Foliage seems to be constantly changing colors throughout the season as it matures with shades of caramel. Interest is also created with contrasting colors on the underside of the leaf which is a distinct burgundy color. Plants are vigorous and relatively large creating a big canopy hence the name. Small flowers gave it a more naturalized appearance great for use in a woodland garden. Winter survival was perfect after Colorado 2 winters.



***Lupinus* x 'Beefeater' from Gulley Greenhouse / Eason Horticulture Resources**

The intense red color and large blooms easily make this a "Wow" plant even from across the garden! The sheer number of blooms set this apart from other lupines but the flower stems were strong without any lodging and it also kept its foliage for a longer time. The red flower color held up well in full sun and it seemed to bloom more profusely in full sun as well.



***Phlox paniculata* 'Ka-Pow® Soft Pink' from Darwin Perennials**

Flowers covered the foliage with a beautiful canopy of pink creating some impressive flower power with a long season of bloom. The entire 'Ka-Pow®' series has been noted for its excellence in the past and this year its reliability was reinforced as the soft pink entry was another winner. Plants had excellent branching and required no pinching plus they seemed to be resistant to powdery mildew.

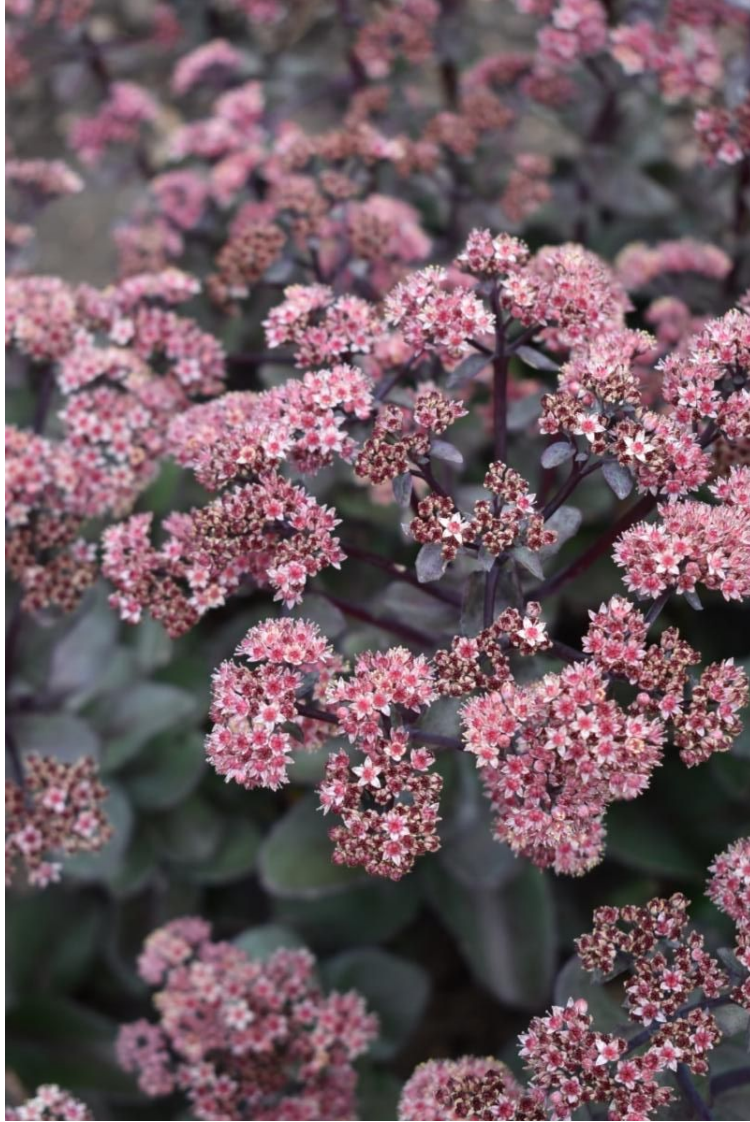


**Sedum 'Rock 'N Grow® Back in Black'  
from Proven Winners®/Walters Gardens**

The dark foliage is almost black at times and makes a great contrast with the red centers and cream petals. It also makes a nice contrast with the many other green foliage plants in most landscapes. It flowers late and makes a great resource for sustaining pollinators late in the season. The uniform plants are attractive as well as being low maintenance and a good water conserving choice for the western garden. During 2023 it tolerated unusually heavy rains and is adaptable to multiple sites.







## Final Thoughts from Annual Trial Student Coordinator - Tate Erickson



Dear Breeding Companies, Industry, and Garden Enthusiasts,

After three incredible years of nurturing and cultivating, it's time for me to bid adieu to our beloved Trial Garden. These years have been filled with growth, beauty, and community, and I'm extremely grateful for who have made these years so rewarding.

Over the years I have learned many lessons from classmates, cohorts, volunteers, and visitors. One of the most impactful lessons is the beauty of patience and perseverance while gardening, as not every season is the same. While challenges might arise such as not receiving the right plants, irregular precipitation, theft, flooding, water main breaks, or early frosts, it's all something that we roll with not letting it impact the greater project we accomplish every year.

Other takeaways have been the power of community. Friendships formed through collaboration while at the trials. And learning that there are endless opportunities for growth and learning everywhere!

I want to extend my deepest thanks to each and every one of you who made the last three years unforgettable. Your passion, commitment, and love for our garden have been the driving force behind our success as transplanting and installing in the garden wouldn't go as smoothly without your help. It's an inspiration to learn from everyone who has sprouted interest!

Although this chapter has reached an end, my love for horticulture will only keep growing and strengthening. I'm looking forward to exploring regional and national environmental conditions, production and applied landscape design styles. I hope to continue in public horticulture, as visitors and educating those who come around has always been an inspiration. I also hope you continue your gardening journey as exciting things sound to be onlooking the future at CSU!

With deep appreciation and fond memories, it's been an incredible journey working alongside you and I

look forward to what the future holds. Thank you for being a part of this beautiful adventure with me over the past few years.

Tate Erickson

Annual Trial Crew 2021

Annual Trial Coordinator 2022, 2023

B.S. Environmental Horticulture: Nursery and Landscape Management - Dec 2023

B.S. Horticulture: Controlled Environments - Dec 2023

[Visit our website](#)

Colorado State University Flower Trial Garden | 1401 Remington Street, Fort Collins, CO 80525

[Unsubscribe david.staats@colostate.edu](#)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [david.staats@colostate.edu](#) powered by



Try email marketing for free today!