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New UK Plants & Climate Change

A few new plants from the United Kingdom that may be available to us soon; and does tree planting really help with climate change?
by *Art Drysdale*

by **Art Drysdale**


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Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>

September 27, 2009



Just over a week ago, one of the United Kingdom's wholesale nursery shows, the Four Oaks show, (located about ten miles from Manchester International Airport) was held and saw the introduction of 30 or more new plants. I took a look and a brief read on most of those, and decided to show you a photo, and just a brief bit of info about six of the newbies--three hardy shrubs and three bedding plants or perennials.




The show was written about in a fair amount of detail by Gavin McEwan, the U.K. *HortWeek's* features editor. Here is what he had to say, along with tiny bits of additional info I was able to pluck from the Web.

Cordyline 'Pink Passion' won the prize for the best new nursery stock introduction at the show. It was introduced by Seiont Nurseries in Caernarfon, Wales. Its vivid purple leaves are edged hot pink, and it is hardy down to -5 deg C. The company says the response so far in garden centre trials has been "remarkable". It should be hardy at least out here on Vancouver Island!



Another winner shown at Four Oaks was a shrub known as *Coprosmas* 'Pacific Sunset', said to be a sport of the similar 'Pacific Night' and was found in the nursery of John Woods, located near Woodbridge, Suffolk. This plant won the "Best new plant in the show" at yet another U.K. wholesale show held just last week--GLEE. It is held annually in Birmingham, and has always been considered a "must-see" show for garden centre people.

The colour is at its most intense in spring and again in late autumn. *Coprosmas* 'Pacific Sunset' has a compact and neat habit and is perfect in patio containers. Like the foregoing *Cordyline*, this one too is considered hardy to -5C.



Finally in the hardy nursery stock classification is *Tetrapanax papyrifera* 'Rex'. This plant is grown for its foliage, which in addition to being slightly felted develops huge leaves, often up to a metre across. The plant itself will usually grow to a height of four metres. It may well be hardy even in zone 7, but certainly should survive in zone 8, such as here on Vancouver Island. It is suggested that it be planted in a sheltered area.



If it should be killed back by a frost, it generally will re-grow from the base to the full height in two years. It likewise easily survives major pruning.

In the perennial 'division' the first plant that attracted my attention is one that is already available in Canada, from Valleybrook Gardens (Heritage Perennials). Unfortunately they do not have a photo of it on their Website: www.perennials.com. It is a Highlander Delphinium, one of a new group of doubles recently developed in Scotland. 'Moonlight' has frilly blooms of soft lilac-mauve with an unusual lime green centre. It is excellent for cutting. Gardeners are advised by Valleybrook to trim back spent stems to the base to encourage repeat bloom later in the autumn.



I chose the 'Moonlight' *Delphinium* because of its interesting colour combination, particularly the lime centre. My next choice was also made for the colour of the bloom. It is Begonia 'Tropical Desire' which comes from the Young Plants nursery located in Stratford upon Avon in Warwickshire. This company (as well as others) has a number of newer yellow-flowered begonias but the special colouration of this one attracted me. The growers say it has "Gloxinia-type" foliage which makes it unique.


Finally, I liked the look of *Petubrachoa* Super Cal 'Vanilla Blush' from Kernock Park Plants in Cornwall, the south of England. Unfortunately I could find no mention of it on the company's or any other Website other than the men-tions made by *HortWeek* magazine.

Above, the popular *Cordyline* 'Pink Passion' courtesy Seiont Nurseries; *Coprosmas* 'Pacific Sunset' courtesy John Woods Nurseries; and two shots of *Tetrapanax papyrifera* 'Rex' courtesy Just Must Perennials and Pan Global Plants respectively. Below, Begonia 'Tropical Desire' courtesy Young Plants; Delphinium 'Moonlight' courtesy of Delamore Young Plants; and finally *Petubrachoa* Super Cal 'Vanilla Blush' courtesy Kernock Park Plants.


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You'll just have to enjoy the photo!

* * *

While writing about new introductions at a wholesale trade conference in the U.K., I thought it might also be of interest to note the comments of a major tree consultant who addressed the (U.K.) Arboricultural Association annual meeting held at the University of Exeter. Jeremy Barrell chaired part of the association's conference last week--and stressed that tree planting will *not* mitigate climate change. However, trees can play a role in helping towns and cities adapt to the challenges of climate change, such as flooding and increased temperatures.

"We are on the brink of disaster right now," said Jeremy Barrell, during the Arboricultural Association conference's second day on Tuesday (22 September).

"[Climate change] Mitigation and adaptation are the big issues. But planting trees in towns will make no difference whatsoever in mitigation. However, in terms of adaptation we can make our environments much better and it is that area we can play a role in. That is the role for arboriculturists in the near future."

This is, to me, a very interesting observation in view of the fact we have ever so many "groups" (including at least some landscape architects) currently running around pushing the planting of trees as the "answer" to all of our global climate change problems! According to Jeremy Barrell such is not the case. Thanks to the U.K.'s *HortWeek* magazine for pointing out this often-ignored fact.



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