

New and Interesting Native Cultivars and Their Propagation

Bart O'Brien

Head, Horticulture Department, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Claremont, California 91711

With all of the interest in native plants in recent years, there has been a definite resurgence of activity in the selection of new forms and rediscovery of nearly forgotten gems. This paper will briefly describe some of the best of these plants and their propagation.

***Aesculus californica* 'Canyon Pink'**. To date this is the only named selection of our native buckeye. This selection has the normal attributes of the species: silver-grey bark, bright apple-green new growth that turns a pleasing mid-green as it matures, and the large brown round seeds in the fall. The distinctive feature of this cultivar is the large conch-shell pink inflorescence, and a free-flowering disposition. This tree may be grown as either a standard or a multi-trunked specimen. Established trees are drought tolerant in all but the hottest climates, but will go dormant when they are drought stressed. Specimens that are watered regularly will go deciduous in the early fall months. This outstanding selection was made by the late Dara Emery of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden from seed collected in Monterey County. 'Canyon Pink' is difficult to propagate, and currently the only method that has had any success is grafting.

***Arctostaphylos* 'Bert Johnson'**. One of the most adaptable of the manzanita ground covers, 'Bert Johnson' rivals *A. uva-ursi* 'Point Reyes' in its tolerance of heat and drought. Plants have withstood temperatures of 113°F in full sun at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden with no ill effects noticed. This cultivar also performs well in shaded coastal gardens. Plants are extremely dense growers and do not require any pinching or pruning. Specimens in containers or those planted at the top of a low retaining wall will gracefully cascade. Leaves are lightly hairy, and vary from mid-green to grey-green with the season. Small clusters of pale pink, urn-shaped flowers appear in early spring. This selection has been around for quite a number of years, but was finally named earlier this year for Bert Johnson, one of the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden's gardeners. 'Bert Johnson' was selected by James Roof of the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden, and is actually the type plant from which *A. edmundsii* var. *parvifolia* was originally described. [Botanical Editor's note: This taxon is now understood to be a hybrid between *A. glandulosa* and *A. nevadensis*] Plants are easily grown from cuttings taken from November to February and treated with 0.8% IBA and given bottom heat from 65 to 70°F. Cuttings may take from 1 to 3 months to strike roots.

***Artemisia pycnocephala* 'David's Choice'**. This plant is a dense, low-growing evergreen perennial which is vigorous and good looking throughout the year. The soft grey, finely divided foliage and dense growth habit are the best features of this David Amme, 1980 selection from the Point Reyes peninsula. This cultivar is longer-lived and better behaved in both nursery containers and garden situations

than is the straight species. 'David's Choice' is moderately drought tolerant, but usually looks best when grown with adequate water. Overhead watering may rot the dense foliage in hot climates. Flower stalks may be removed as they form to better maintain the clean rounded growth habit. This plant was introduced by California Flora Nursery in Fulton, California in 1983 and won an Award of Merit from the California Horticultural Society in 1988. It is easily grown from vegetative tip cuttings at any time of the year.

***Calystegia macrostegia* 'Anacapa'**. This plant is an extremely vigorous lush-looking evergreen vine, which may cover a small house in about two to three years. The pink, three-inch, morning glory flowers are freely produced through the warm months of the year. The triangular leaves are bright green. This vine climbs by twining, and rapidly builds up a layer of thatch which can be removed by hard pruning. David Verity of the Mildred Mathias Botanic Garden at UCLA made this selection from a plant growing on Anacapa Island. It is easily grown from vegetative tip cuttings whenever the plant is in active growth.

***Ceanothus griseus* 'Diamond Heights'**. A very unusual variegated form of the Carmel creeper, formerly called *C. griseus* var. *horizontalis*. The oval-shaped leaves are a pale chartreuse color with a central splotch of the normal dark green. This plant is slower growing than all other selections of *C. griseus*. Flowers are a pale grey-blue and are hardly noticed because of the loudness of the foliage. The foliage will burn in direct hot sun, so it is best used in partial shade or eastern exposures. Plants stay low and need less pinching than other selections in this group. 'Diamond Heights', along with the other selections of *C. griseus*, is not drought tolerant except when planted in coastal situations. When planted in other areas, these plants will require fairly regular watering. This plant was discovered in a landscape planting in the Diamond Heights area of San Francisco. It is a little less successful in propagation than other selections of *C. griseus*, but can be readily grown from tips, seconds, and thirds under fairly standard conditions. As with all the *Ceanothus*, the cutting material should be semi-hard (too soft and the material will rot, too hard and the percentage that will root is low and will take a long time).

***Chrysopsis villosa* 'San Bruno Mountain'**. Nearly ever-blooming, this superior plant has a dense growth habit and is widely adapted to garden culture. Plants will reach 4 to 6 in. high with a spread of about 2 ft. This sterile selection will flower continuously during the warm months of the year, which explains its most important need—it must be regularly dead-headed. Experiments at Cal-Poly, San Luis Obispo have shown that this may be done with a weed-whip without damaging the plants. 'San Bruno Mountain' was selected by Ted Kipping from San Bruno Mountain just south of San Francisco. Plants are readily grown from tip cuttings taken in the spring before the first wave of flowers, and secondarily through the summer months.

***Dudleya* 'Frank Reinelt'**. This *Dudleya* is good looking throughout the year. The grey, terete leaves form 3- to 6-inch rosettes, and a mature plant may reach 3 ft across and a height of 18 in. The branched salmon-colored flower stems carry numerous pale yellow urn-shaped flowers. This plant is the result of controlled crosses made by Frank Reinelt, and was only recently named by Wayne Roderick. Plants sold as *Dudleya* 'Anacapa' are synonymous with 'Frank Reinelt'. It is easily

grown from cuttings (individual rosettes) which are placed in a shaded area to callous for a couple of days and then placed in a flat or pot of well-drained material.

***Erigeron glaucus* 'Cape Sebastian'**. This is the most dwarf selection of *Erigeron glaucus* to date. Plants grown in full to mostly sunny conditions will grow from 2 to 3 in. tall with a spread of 18 to 24 in. Plants tolerate heavy clay soils, and moderate amounts of water. The lavender-pink flowers appear on short stems and are roughly the size of a nickel. The plants will flower intermittently through the year with a profusion of blooms in April and May. As with all forms of *Erigeron*, this selection will require dead-heading. This plant was selected by Brett Hall of the U.C. Santa Cruz Arboretum from Cape Sebastian in southern Oregon. Plants are readily grown from cuttings. Nursery grown plants may temporarily lose their dwarf growth habit if they are grown in too much shade or with too much fertilizer, but will behave once they are planted out.

***Erigeron* 'W. R.'** An extremely durable clone, originally collected by Wayne Roderick in Del Norte County. This plant survives extremes of heat (over 115°F) and cold (to at least -6°F). Plants apparently grow equally well in full sun (even with extreme heat) or partial shade. This selection has long flower stems and a very compact mat of basal strap-like leaves. The lavender daisy flowers are from 1 to 1½ in. across and have pale yellow centers. 'W. R.' is easily propagated from vegetative tip cuttings taken at any time of the year.

***Eriogonum fasciculatum* 'Theodore Payne'**. An excellent ground cover form of California buckwheat, this form has been in and out of the trade since its discovery at Point Mugu in 1952 by Mr. Dana Bowers. This plant has needle-like, grass-green leaves and small off-white balls of tiny flowers. 'Theodore Payne' is easily grown in full sun and well-drained soils. It is drought tolerant when established. This cultivar is easily propagated from partially firm (not soft) new growth in mid to late spring.

***Eriogonum fasciculatum* 'Warriner Lytle'**. It is most unfortunate that this beautiful plant is such an ugly duckling when it is grown in containers. Leaves are narrow and olive green. The foliage mat of this ground cover selection will spread to 3 ft or more across and will reach from 6 to 8 in. high. Dense clouds of tiny off-white flowers crown the plants for 2 months in the late summer and early fall. This plant is especially delightful when it is grown at the front of a dry border, or lightly cascading about boulders or low walls. 'Warriner Lytle' is a recent introduction from the Theodore Payne Foundation and is named for one of their dedicated friends. Plants are easily propagated from partially firm (not soft) new growth in mid to late spring.

***Eriogonum umbellatum* var. *polyanthum* 'Shasta Sulphur'**. This plant has been in the trade for a number of years, but was finally given a cultivar name earlier this year. 'Shasta Sulphur' has a delightful dome-like growth habit for a number of years, before the center dies out and the plant becomes senescent and needs to be replaced. As with nearly all eriogonums, this plant is brittle—if the plant is broken or damaged when it is young it almost never fully recovers. Aside from these negatives, this is a truly spectacular plant in the garden. The grey-green spatulate leaves are produced in a whorl-like array. Dense umbels of vibrant

canary yellow blossoms appear in May and last for a month. 'Shasta Sulphur' was selected by Warren Roberts, superintendent of the U.C. Davis Arboretum. Cuttings are best taken in spring, and consist of one "whorl" of leaves and the segment of stem below it (do not include any part of the lower "whorl"). Treat the cuttings with liquid 0.4% IBA and place them in a flat with bottom heat between 65 and 70°F.

***Festuca californica* 'Serpentine Blue'**. This is the best selection of California fescue that I am aware of. The stiff leaves are fairly broad for this species and are a beautiful shade of steel-blue. The inflorescences are particularly rigid in this selection, and will normally last well into the winter in a garden situation—unlike any other selection of this species. Plants do best in partial shade, and benefit from additional summer water. 'Serpentine Blue' was selected by Roger Raiche of U. C. Berkeley Botanical Garden from a plant he found in Marin County. This plant is easily grown from division or from "cuttings". A mature clump can be divided into dozens of 1/8 to 1/4 in. "cuttings" with or without roots, and placed untreated into a cutting flat. These "cuttings" will promptly root.

***Festuca rubra* 'Jughandle'**. This is the most dwarf selection of red fescue, with mature plants reaching from 3 to 6 in. high. The thread-like leaves are a steel-blue color, and contrast nicely with the silvery, broad awns of the inflorescence. Plants look best with additional summer water, and are not bothered by heat. Older plants may die back at the center or back of the clump, but this is generally not a severe problem. This plant was found along the Mendocino coast by David Amme. 'Jughandle' is grown by division.

***Fremontodendron californicum* 'Margo'**. This plant is an exciting newcomer from the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden. The plant has bright green, nearly glabrous foliage and produces a myriad of bright yellow flowers in April and May. The plant has a low, spreading to arching growth habit. Plants prefer full sun, well-drained soils, and little to no summer water. Established plants require drought. This plant was discovered by Daniel Campbell in Yuba County. Plants are said to be especially easy to root from cuttings taken in November.

***Heuchera* 'Lillian's Pink'**. This plant is thought to be a hybrid between *H. pilosissima* and *H. sanguineum*. Plants form a somewhat loose rosette of lush, hairy, pale grey-green leaves. The pink flowers are carried on a 2-ft inflorescence. This selection was made by Ron Lutsko, Jr. about 3 years ago. The plant occurred as a chance seedling in Lillian Henningsen's garden. Plants are propagated from cuttings or from division of established clumps.

***Heuchera* 'Opal', 'Susanna', and 'Wendy'**. This trio of heucheras has the same parentage as the better known 'Santa Ana Cardinal' and 'Genevieve': *H. maxima* × *H. sanguineum*. In fact, all of these plants are siblings raised by Dr. Lee Lenz in 1953 at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. They have been given clonal names over the past 37 years: 'Santa Ana Cardinal' (1958), 'Genevieve' (1974), 'Susanna' (1974), 'Wendy' (late 70s or early 80s), and 'Opal' (1990). The latter three are described here: 'Susanna' is nearly identical to 'Santa Ana Cardinal' with its bright green shiny lush rosette of leaves and 3-ft inflorescences of bright red flowers. The primary difference being that 'Susanna' starts blooming about 2 weeks later. 'Wendy' has much larger grey-green hairy foliage in looser rosettes and 3-ft

inflorescences of rosy pink flowers. This selection is particularly free flowering. 'Opal' has large grey-green rosettes of foliage and 2-ft inflorescences of white flowers which turn pale pink as they age. All of these selections are best grown in masses in light shade. Established plants are moderately drought tolerant. Plants are easily propagated from cuttings, but there are typically few cuttings available per plant. Established plants may have the top portion of their rosette removed (as a cutting) and numerous side shoots will quickly develop into cutting sized portions. All five of these plants are now being grown from tissue culture and should become readily available to the trade in a year or two.

***Iris* 'Canyon Snow'**. This selection is probably the most desirable and easily grown of the Pacific coast hybrid iris. The leaves are bright green and will reach about 1 ft high. Plants slowly form large clumps. The large, flat, white flowers have bright yellow eyes on the falls. As with most of our native iris, these plants do not typically have an active root system in the summer months, so care must be taken not to overwater the plants. 'Canyon Snow' was selected by Dara Emery of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Plants are easily grown from divisions made in late fall, just as the new roots are pushing. If you wait too long, the new roots will be broken and the plants will not establish themselves very quickly.

***Keckiella* 'Dick Straw'**. This plant has been around for many years, yet it has never been formally introduced. It is a segregate from a controlled cross of *K. antirrhinoides* and *K. cordifolia* made by Dr. Lee Lenz at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, and is named for the botanist who originally segregated the genus *Keckiella* from the genus *Penstemon*. This plant is particularly vigorous and showy. It has an arching growth habit and will reach 3 to 4 ft high and a spread of up to 6 ft. The bicolored flowers are produced by the hundreds and are dark orange on the outside and yellow-orange on the inside. Plants grown in hot interior climates will go completely dormant during the summer months, usually about a month after flowering in late May. New plants may be grown from vegetative new growth taken in the spring, or from dormant wood cuttings taken in the fall. Plants grown from the new growth generally perform better.

***Lavatera* 'Purissima'**. A vigorous, unusual hybrid between our native *L. assurgentiflora* and its Baja California cousin, *L. venetus*. This plant was recently introduced by Tree of Life Nursery. Plants have a low, spreading growth habit reaching 2 to 3 ft tall with a spread of about 8 ft. The luxuriant rich green foliage is unlike most native plants. Plants perform best with regular deep watering. The mallow-like, rose-magenta flowers have deep violet centers. Cuttings are best taken in spring from semi-hardened new growth.

***Malacothamnus fasciculatus* 'Edgewood'**. An outstanding grey foliage shrub. The stems of this plant are densely covered with a velvety fur, the dark grey leaves are less heavily coated. Flower spikes are 2 to 3 ft long and carry many 1- to 2-in. pink hollyhock-like flowers. This plant was selected and introduced by Yerba Buena Nursery in 1991. As with most *Malacothamnus*, this plant is well suited for growing on slopes and for erosion control due to the production of underground runners, but it adapts well to garden culture. New plants are readily produced from vegetative semi-hardened new growth in the spring and early summer, or from

divisions. [Botanical Editor's note: *M. arcuatus*, under which name this cultivar was originally named, is now recognized under *M. fasciculatus*.]

***Philadelphus lewisii* 'Goose Creek'**. This plant is the double-flowered selection of our native mock orange. The plant was collected by Ray Collett of the U.C. Santa Cruz Arboretum and was introduced by Wintergreen Nursery. The plants have a fountain-like growth habit and will reach 6 ft high with a slightly wider spread. This shrub is deciduous. Plants are easily grown in most gardens in either full sun or partial shade. Cuttings may be taken from semi-hardened new growth or from dormant wood, the latter being particularly easy. [Botanical Editor's note: Originally described under the subspecies *californicus*, which is no longer recognized.]

***Rhamnus californica* 'Mound San Bruno'**. An unusually dense, small-leaved selection of our native coffee berry. The name is a pun referring to both the plant's growth habit and its place of origin, San Bruno Mountain. Young plants will quickly grow 2 to 3 ft tall and will have a somewhat open growth habit. But within 2 years, the plants fill in and continue growing at a slow rate to 4 ft in height with a spread of about 6 ft. This plant was discovered and named by Roger Raiche of the U.C. Berkeley Botanical Garden. Plants are relatively easily grown from semi-hard cuttings taken in spring.

***Salvia clevelandii* 'Winnifred Gilman'**. An outstanding plant, selected by Ron Lutsko, Jr., and recently introduced by California Flora Nursery. This plant, and the later listed blue and white form are the only clones of *Salvia clevelandii* at this time, all others ('Allen Chickering', 'Aromas', 'Poza Blue', 'Whirly Blue', etc.) are all hybrids between *S. clevelandii* and *S. leucophylla*. This small sage will grow 3 to 4 ft tall, and has spikes of dark lavender-blue flowers in late spring and early summer. Plants perform best in full sun and well-drained soils. As with all of the selections of our native shrubby salvias, this plant should be cut back hard on a yearly basis in late fall or early winter—from a third to a half of the growth should be removed. Plants are easily grown from semi-hard cuttings taken in spring.

***Salvia spathacea* 'Kawatre'**. The hummingbird sage, one of my favorite plants, should be much more widely grown. The plants are fairly good looking in containers, and few people can resist an impulse buy of this plant when it is in bloom. The broad light green leaves are primarily basal and have a delightful fruity fragrance, but it is the showy 2 to 3 ft flower spikes which command attention. The plants spread slowly underground to form slightly mounded colonies. Plants perform best when grown with additional summer water and in partial shade conditions. This selection was made by Nevin Smith from material collected in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Plants may be grown from divisions or from cuttings.

In closing, I would like to mention two new promising selections which are currently undergoing testing. These plants have not been formally named yet, but may be in the near future.

***Rhamnus californica* "Ed Holm's Seedling"**. An exciting development arising from the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation's introduction program. The plants have broad, lush foliage which is bright green when new and becoming dark green as they mature. Plants produce a quantity of ½-in. red berries in the fall. This plant was grown from seed collected along Skyline Boulevard in San Mateo County by

Ed Holm. It is currently not available, as it is undergoing testing throughout California at this time.

***Salvia clevelandii* "Blue and White"** This very distinctive clone appeared in a flat of wild collected seed from San Diego County grown at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Mature plants of this unnamed selection will grow from 3 to 4 ft tall with an equal spread. The small leaves are grey green. The most unusual feature of this selection is that the flowers are either white or blue- violet. The color varies within each whorl of flowers such that the appearance of the plant changes almost daily. This plant will be distributed to a few gardens throughout the state to test its adaptability before being formally released to the nursery industry. Look for this new plant from Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden within the next 2 years. [Author's note: Since the presentation of this paper, this plant has been given the cultivar name of 'Betsy Clebsch'.]