

Where Have All the New Plants Gone?®

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years I have collected, raised, discovered, and introduced many new plants. Some have proved themselves as very desirable for ornamental use while others did not make the grade. Today I would like to bring alive the memories of these plants that were new and give a little history of who and what made them new and desirable.

LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF SOME OF THOSE PLANTS

Cupressus sempervirens 'Swane's Golden'.

History. Discovered by Ben Swane around 1947, from a sport found growing on a *C. sempervirens* growing in an Australian cemetery. While traveling at a New Zealand I.P.P.S. Conference, Ben shared with me how he got a fire brigade ladder to hoist him up so he could gather seed. He selected the now popular golden pencil pine from cuttings which he propagated from the four best seedlings which did give rise to a small difference in the form of the plant. I have found the cutting strike rate increases with a good warm summer with high sunlight.

Popularity. Very popular in Australasia until the last few years where a change in garden trends and smaller gardens have seen new plantings decline. Still grown in a number of places round the world and still worthy of merit. A number one discovery.

Coleonema 'Sunset Gold'.

History. Discovered in Sydney, Australia in the late 1960s. The brother of Val Shultz of Valmar Nursery found a sport growing from a green *Coleonema*. I saw the first stock plants while visiting a fellow I.P.P.S. member John Teulon for lunch. As I toured his garden of all its treasures my eyes were drawn to a mass of gold in the property below his. I thought it was a new conifer, but John walked down to the fence and showed me this new discovery which was the initial stock of what has become one of the most popular garden plants in Australasia

Popularity. This has to be one of the best new plants that has stayed the test of time. An all time winner with its bright gold foliage, compact form with pink flowers and very versatile use.

Cupressus arizonica var. *glabra* 'Blue Ice'

History. A personal discovery found in 1963 growing in a large seedling batch of what we called Arizonica hedging. As the rows of potted plants grew one plant caught my eye. It was a brilliant icy blue with a really compact form. A real once in a lifetime discovery. A plant that would make any nursery man's heart leap. I brought it into commercial production by propagation of the juvenile foliage in a sharp sandy mix under outside mist. It would be wise to note that as stock plants age the strike rate drops dramatically.

Popularity. A popular plant in its day, but this once new plant has met the same decline in popularity that a number of larger new plants have. It is still grown around the world, probably the best blue form of *Cupressus arizonica* var. *glabra*. This plant can be kept under control by heavy trimming making worthwhile as a great feature plant in a formal garden, container, or screen.

***Genista* ‘Yellow Imp’**

History. I discovered this in 1975 growing on the side of a traffic island on the San Francisco bridge. Yours truly asked the driver to stop while he obtained some material. Then I imported it into N.Z. and named it *Genista* ‘Yellow Imp’.

Popularity. Still very popular in both Australia and N.Z. Bright yellow flower mass and trims well.

***Coprosma* ‘Rainbow Surprise’ (New Zealand Plant Variety Rights (NZ-PVR))**

History. First discovered at Poriati, Napier 1986 as a sport from a plant of *Coprosma* ‘Brunette’. Its attractive form and bright multicolored foliage has made it a very desirable garden plant throughout many parts of the world where it has been protected.

Popularity. Still popular as a very versatile garden plant in landscape features patio pots and colour accents. Easy to maintain. Brilliant colours in cooler months.

***Scabious* ‘Butterfly Blue’ (NZPVR)**

History. Discovered by Mr. D. Tristram of the United Kingdom. This plant is another all time winner grown around most of the world, for its compact habit, short and strong flower stems, long flowering period, and versatility of being able to be grown almost any where over a large temperature range. Obtained for New Zealand distribution through I.P.P.S. member Mike Dunnett, a United Kingdom new plant icon.

Popularity. Its prolific flowering and ease of growing in most conditions has made it as popular today as when it was new.

***Acacia cognata* ‘Green Mist’ (NZPVR)**

History. Discovered in Sydney in 1988 by Bruce Wilkie. One of the most stunning plants I have seen, a dwarf seedling out of *A. cognata*. A plant of fresh live green beauty to enhance any garden where an *Acacia* will grow. This plant has not been widely distributed as it is difficult to propagate from cuttings which are the only means of multiplication.

Popularity. I consider this to still have new plant potential even though it has been known for sometime. This plant is a real challenge to a propagator’s skills and as these are realised this plant will have a place in the garden scene. It is a real eye catcher, small compact, and easy to grow and maintain.

***Acacia pravissima* ‘Gold Lace’ (NZPVR)**

History. Arose as a spontaneous prostrate seedling amongst a batch of normal *Acacia cardiophylla* in the nursery of Evan Clucas in Melbourne in 1980.

Popularity. I also consider this to still have new plant potential even though it has been known for sometime. This plant is also a real challenge to a propagator's skill and as these are realised this plant will have a place in the garden scene. This beautiful cascading plant has soft fern-like leaves and abundance of bright golden flowers. It is a real eye catcher.

***Boronia heterophylla* cultivars 'Cameo' (NZPVR), 'Moonglow' (NZPVR), 'Just Margaret' (NZPVR), and 'Ice Charlotte' (NZPVR)**

History. *Boronia* 'Moonglow' and 'Cameo' were chance seedlings found growing in their wild habitat in Western Australia. The latter were mutations from the popular red-purple boronia, standard *B. heterophylla*.

Popularity. Flowering in late spring with a mass of coloured bells they are always popular even though they have been released a number of years. Popular as a garden filler although short lived and as a cut flower for markets around the world.

***Plumbago auriculata* 'Monott' (NZPVR) Royal Cape™ plumbago**

History. Bred by Californian Paul Scott who had a true love for blue flowers. He set out to breed a *Plumbago* with true blue flowers which would not fade in the heat of the summer sun. After 8 years and some thousands of plants he chose what we now know as the popular Royal Cape, able to perform in tough summer conditions with its bright blue flowers and not fade. A must for any dry warm spot.

Popularity. Popular in the warm dry areas of the world as a reliable summer blue-flowering shrub.

Other plants that have enjoyed a popular new status and are still popular today include:

- *Photinia* \times *fraseri* 'Red Robin'
- *Helipterum* (*Rhodanthe anthemoides*) 'Paper Cascade' (NZPVR)
(syn. *Helipterum anthemoides* 'Paper Cascade')
- *Lophomyrtus* \times *ralphii* 'Kathryn'
- *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Sheen'
- *Raphiolepis* \times *delacourii* 'Enchantres'

CONCLUSION

During this presentation I trust I have given you some insight to the world of new plants. Some history of those whose passion it is to search out and find the new, and to bring joy to the many millions of keen gardeners throughout the world. In addition, to show that which gives a new plant the staying power to compete among the many thousands of plants that were new. I know I have only touched on a few new plants that I was favoured to discover or be given the opportunity to introduce but I hope it will give you the inspiration and vision to seek out plants with good staying properties and their relevant propagation techniques, to be shared by all people.