

## Nuggets of Knowledge — New Plant Forum®

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***Echinacea purpurea* ‘Lucky Star’.** ‘Lucky Star’ is the first new Jelitto *Echinacea* introduction since the long-lived ‘Rocky Top’ in 2003. We’ve waited until we had something special and, after years of careful selection, we’re very pleased with this lovely white-flowering selection, bred out of Jelitto’s ‘Rubinstern’ (ruby star). Beautiful white petals, horizontally arranged around a large cone, distinguish this consistent, new affordable seed strain.

Why does anyone need another *Echinacea* introduction? There is a confusion of dazzling color selections to sift through, but only a few are durable garden plants. And when propagated by tissue culture cultivars came on board, the cost of production, and royalties, significantly increased the price tag. We’ve tested most of the highly touted offerings from tissue culture and the seed houses and felt, if garden worthiness were a consideration, they left a little to be desired.

Jelitto has kept a close eye on *Echinacea* introductions and watched cultivars come and go. We’ve got a proud and proven *Echinacea* track record. ‘Magnus’ has previously been awarded the Perennial Plant Association’s Plant of the Year and, along with ‘Rubinstern’, the Royal Horticultural Society’s Award of Garden Merit (A.G.M.). They still are popular seed items and remain a distinct value for anyone growing excellent plants.

***Eriogonum allenii* ‘Little Rascal’.** There are over 250 different buckwheat species native to North America, but only a few of these *Eriogonum* taxa are in cultivation. *Eriogonum allenii*, the shale barren buckwheat, is an astoundingly beautiful and rare species, growing naturally in only a few areas in Virginia and West Virginia. The genus deserves wider attention as an ornamental and ‘Little Rascal’ seems poised for recognition. Jelitto’s trial results have fulfilled criteria that we find most valuable: proven toughness and versatility. We have selected this durable perennial for its handsome rosettes of grey-green, paddle-shaped leaves and its neat, low-growing habit and consistent growth.

‘Little Rascal’ grows so evenly that it would make an excellent candidate for mass landscape planting. Or combine with *Scabiosa* ‘Blue Horizon’, *Seseli gummiferum*, and *Penstemon* ‘Sunburst Ruby’, in the well-drained border, rock garden, or mixed containers. The nearly 3-month-long flowering extends its usefulness as a good choice for flower bouquets, and the lovely maturing seed capsules would make interesting dried arrangements.

‘Little Rascal’ is very drought resistant, grows to 40 cm (16 in. tall) and is hardy in Zones 5–10. If you are interested in attracting honeybees, this is a must for your garden.

The name *Eriogonum* originates from the Greek *erion*, wool, and *gony*, knee, so-called because the jointed stems are covered with hair.

*Luzula sylvatica* 'Solar Flare'. The great wood rush has a golden future. Jelitto's new seed strain produces low-growing, ground-covering, rhizomatous, evergreen clumps of wide grass-like blades. 'Solar Flare' has consistent golden twisting leaves with fringed, hairy edges, and is at its most colorful early in the season and again in the early winter months. During the summer the leathery leaves turn soft green.

There are a few notable herbaceous plants whose decorative foliage shine like a beacon early in the season. The chartreuse new leaves of *Heuchera villosa* var. *macrorrhizza*, the scalloped leaves of *Alchemilla sericata* 'Gold Strike', and the golden leaves of *Luzula* 'Solar Flare' brighten semi-shaded spots as spring unfolds. *Alchemilla* 'Gold Strike' and *L.* 'Solar Flare' both capture glistening drops of morning dew. The great wood rush prefers humus-rich, woodland soils, but can tolerate dry conditions once established.

The late-spring flowering clusters mature to dark brown and can be used in fresh or dried floral arrangements. Low maintenance 'Solar Flare' grows to 30 cm (12 in.), and is hardy in Zones 5–8.

The name *Luzula* comes from the Latin, *luceo*, meaning to shine. *Sylvatica* hints at the woodland origins of the species.