

THE SCOOP

Showy  
Shade-Lovers for  
Woodland  
Gardens

*Heuchera 'Peach Flambe'*

---

*Small in stature but mighty in foliage beauty,  
Heuchera and Tiarella enhance a shady spot.*

---

By Rachel Foster

**N**OT LONG AGO, CORAL BELLS (*Heuchera sanguinea*) OFFERED LITTLE more than green leaves decorated with pale, pretty mottling in spring. It was a meat-and-potatoes plant, useful for edging flower beds. Early breeding of this North American native occurred mostly in France and Britain, yielding *H. x brizoides* cultivars — including the elegant Bressingham Hybrids — that had improved flower quality and color. American breeders have dominated the scene since the 1980s, however; and thanks to California's Dara Emery, Pennsylvania's Charles Oliver, and Oregon's Dan Heims, gardeners now have an amazing palette of *Heuchera* from which to choose: they vary in size, form, flower, and — most dramatically — foliage color.

### Colorful Cousins

A torrent of well-dressed *Heuchera* flooded the garden scene in the 1990s after breeders combined selections of a number of species, most notably the purplish bronze-leafed *H.* 'Palace Purple' (probably derived from our western *H. micrantha*) crossed with eastern *H. americana*, which has green leaves prominently marked with silver. The result — silver marbling on purple leaves — was only the beginning. Check out the hues now available in *H.* 'Peach Flambe', *H.* 'Lime Rickey', and *H.* 'Obsidian'.

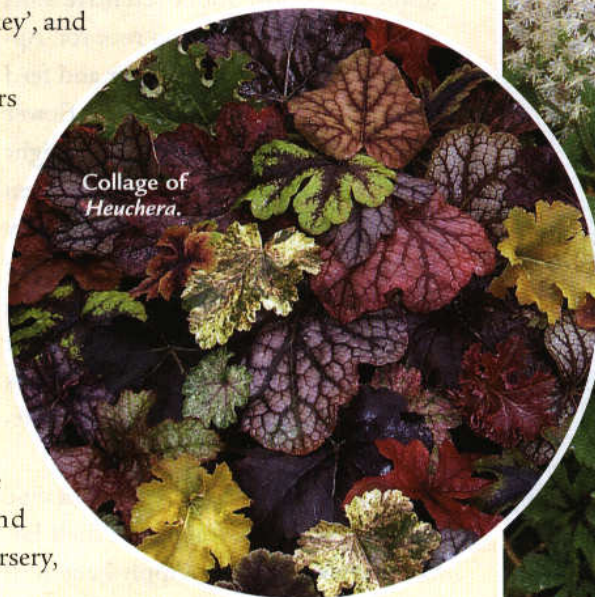
Closely related to *Heuchera*, foamflowers (*Tiarella* spp.) are dainty but durable shade plants that feature maplelike leaves and short spires of fluffy pink or white flowers. Oliver, who worked to increase *Heuchera* tolerance to heat, cold, and humidity, also made some *Tiarella* crosses that began a wave of new introductions. Naturally occurring forms of *Tiarella* sporting lobed leaves or dark leaf markings were the starting material for little beauties such as *T.* 'Elizabeth Oliver' and *T.* 'Dark Star'. At his Oregon wholesale nursery,



*Heuchera* 'Obsidian'

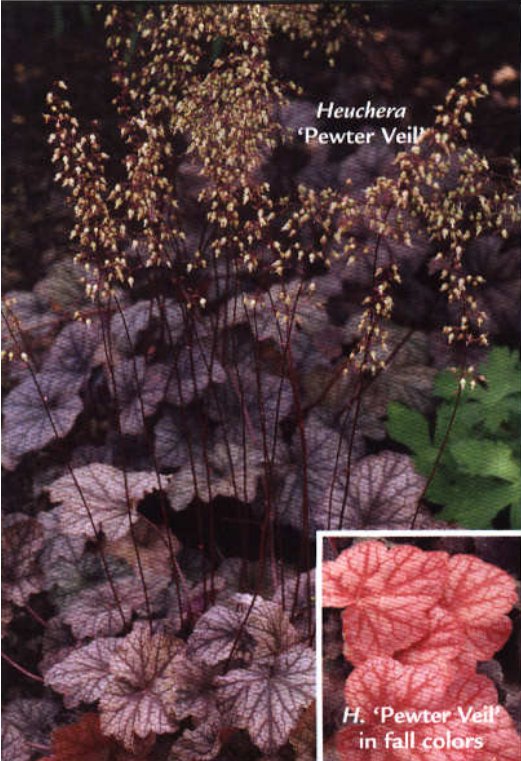


*Tiarella* 'Dark Star'



Collage of  
*Heuchera*.

Photographers: opposite, top right and inset, courtesy of Terra Nova; bottom right, Jerry Pavia



*Heuchera*  
'Pewter Veil'

*H.* 'Pewter Veil'  
in fall colors



*H.* 'Snow Fire'



*Tiarella wherryi* 'Oak Leaf'



**Above:** *Heuchera* and *Tiarella* in the garden of Ken Brown in Tigard, OR.

Terra Nova, Heims breeds and collects exciting new forms of *Heuchera*, *Tiarella*, and *Heucherella* (a bigeneric cross between the two) and uses tissue culture to speed them to market faster than you can evaluate them in your garden.

## Get Growing

Both *Heuchera* and *Tiarella* grow best in crumbly, well-drained soil. Poorly drained or dense water-retentive soils produce poor growth and root rot. Apply average amounts of water and feed plants lightly in spring using a flower and bulb mix that contains lime. Bright light and cool conditions suit *Heuchera* best. Under ideal soil conditions, many *Heuchera* can take full sun in the Pacific Northwest. Most prefer partial shade, which brings out the best foliage color in many varieties. *Tiarella* also likes partial to full shade and compost-enriched soil.

Pests and diseases are few, but vine weevils will nibble leaves and their larvae may devour roots. Apply beneficial nematodes to soil in late April or May to combat weevils. Divide matted clumps

of *Heuchera* and *Tiarella* every three to five years in spring.

## Garden Favorites

*Tiarella wherryi* 'Oak Leaf' is a garden favorite, with deeply lobed, dark-centered leaves and light pink flowers. *T.* 'Jeepers Creepers' is a moderate spreader that has boldly marked leaves that Heims says smother weeds. Given the mind-boggling number of beautiful *Heuchera*, I tend to go for proven performers. *H.* 'Oakington Jewel' has quietly colorful foliage perfectly complemented by showy, clear pink flowers, and it is one tough plant. *H.* 'Mint Frost', *H. americana* 'Dale's Strain' (both have green leaves heavily marbled with silver), and *H.* 'Plum Pudding' (compact growing and deeply purple) are all strong growers, as is the gorgeous *H.* 'Pewter Veil'. I like *H.* 'June Bride' for its large white bells and lightly marbled green foliage. On a visit to Heims's garden two years ago, I enjoyed *H.* 'Champagne Bubbles' and *H.* 'Firefly' for their sheer flower power.

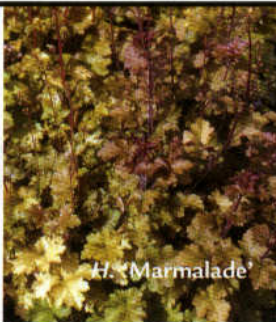
## Best Container Varieties

Because all *Heuchera* do well in containers, it makes sense to showcase outstanding new cultivars in pots. A container may,

in fact, be the best place for varieties of stop-in-your-tracks varieties such as *H.* 'Amber Waves' and *H.* 'Marmalade'. On a quieter note, *H.* 'Dale's Variety' mixes well with bulbs and small evergreens in a year-round pot because its foliage turns to deep rust with a pewter overlay in winter. For me, venerable *H.* 'Palace Purple' still makes a perfect pot plant for light shade with its robust, upstanding, buff-colored blooms. The distinctive leaves and delicate flowers of *Tiarella* varieties such as 'Crow Feather' and 'Iron Butterfly' are delicious additions to mixed containers in shade.

### Happy Companions

With their mounding form and colorful, rounded leaves, *Heuchera* team perfectly with small *Kniphofia*, daylily (*Hemerocallis* spp.), and ornamental grasses. *H.* 'Plum Pudding' is great with blue oat-



*H.* 'Marmalade'



*T.* 'Iron Butterfly'



Dan Heims

grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*) or a coral-flowered *Kniphofia*. In my garden, I enjoy pink-flowered *H.* 'Oakington Jewel' between the daylily 'Cranberry Baby' and *Pennisetum* 'Hameln'. In light shade, combine *Heuchera* with *Hosta*, *Astilbe*, ferns, and sedges. Some *Tiarella* are clumping, others spread to form a low ground cover. All are unsurpassed for filling in at a border's edge or

as part of the woodland tapestry. Try combining a dark-leaved form with hakone grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola'). Any spreading *Tiarella* provides perfect ground cover for spring bulbs or the arching stems of toad lily (*Tricyrtis* spp.), *Kirengeshoma*, and Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum* spp.).

**For plant sources, see page 33.**



Rachel Foster

*Rachel Foster is a gardening consultant and author of All about Gardens: Tips and Commentary from the Southern Willamette Valley. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, and writes a monthly garden column for the Eugene Weekly.*

# Dazzling Dahlias!

**We are the Nation's Largest Dahlia Grower**

Taking Orders NOW thru June 9th.  
Call or visit our website to order our Catalog - \$4.00 (refundable off your first order).  
Business hours: Mon-Fri 9-5:00

## Swan Island Dahlias

**503-266-7711**  
800-410-6540  
995 NW 22nd Ave, Canby, OR  
www.swanislanddahlias.com

See us at the  
2006 Yard, Garden & Patio Show!

## Davidson's Garden Store

"Where Beautiful Gardens Begin"

Pond Supplies ~ Koi ~ Birdbaths ~ Statuary  
Flowers ~ Trees ~ Shrubs

**"Think Spring ... Lots of Fun Stuff"**

Jackson & Perkins Roses  
With This Ad: Buy 3 & Get 1 Free

503-585-0299  
134 Missouri Av S, (off Liberty Rd) Salem, Oregon

## Garden Fever!

*5 minutes from the convention center!*

*A place where gardeners, novice or expert, can find good plants, good tools, good dirt, and helpful advice on sustainable gardening practices.*

**OPEN 7 GARDENING DAYS A WEEK — 9AM TO 6 PM**  
3433 NE 24TH AVE. ~ JUST SOUTH OF FREMONT 503.287.3200