

Delivered 4 times a year to MNLA members in the greenhouse, garden center and nursery business.

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Best Performing Annuals/Perennials in 2003

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This was a challenging year for annual trials in the north! June was a cold and rainy month, followed by a long drought period during July to mid-September. Collectively, these conditions provided opportunities to evaluate drought/heat tolerance. Overall, our annual trials were spectacular and a success for all three trial sites. The annual horticulture events at each site continued to draw hundreds or thousands of visitors, particularly home gardeners, landscape contractors, retailers, growers, wholesalers, and Master Gardeners. Throughout the growing season, all of the sites had a steady flow of visitors.

Below are the listings of the top 10 performers at all three of the Minnesota test sites. These performed the best throughout the growing season, with the highest ratings in their class. If you would like to see the trial data, as well as view photographs of this year's winners and the trials, please

visit our website at <http://www.florifacts.umn.edu/>. This information was presented around the state at the Bedding Plant Conferences, held in Detroit Lakes, Duluth, Rochester, and St. Paul. Your customers will be asking for these top-performing annuals by name next spring. If you haven't already done so, make sure your spring orders include the best for your area of Minnesota. Also, remember to grow or sell the new All America Selection (AAS) winners for 2004 which include *Celosia* Fresh Look 'Yellow', 'Red', *Gypsophila* 'Gypsy Deep Rose', Hollyhock 'Queeny Purple', Melon F₁ 'Amy', *Petunia* F₁ 'Limbo Violet', Squash, Winter F₁ 'Sunshine', and Watermelon F₁ 'Sweet Baby'. According to AAS, branded bedding plants outsell non-branded plants by ~40%. The AAS brand is a sure sell with name recognition throughout the country. Other annuals of merit that continue to receive favorable performance ratings include: Basil 'Golden Ruffles', 'Purple Ruffles';

Begonia (Hiemalis) 'Cindy Fringed', 'Fuga', 'Fuga Cream/Fayal'; Canna 'Tropical Yellow'; Carnation 'Can Can Scarlet'; Geranium 'Pinto Red', 'Orbit Orange'; Hibiscus 'Luna Blush', 'Luna Red'; Impatiens 'Dazzler Deep Pink'; New Guinea Impatiens 'Riviera Deep Salmon', 'Sweetie Pink'; Gaillardia 'Sundance Bicolor'; Petunia 'Ramblin Red', 'Blue Wave'; Spilanthes 'Peek-A-Boo', and Verbena 'Escapade Bright Eyes'.

We polled visitors to the St. Paul Display & Trial Gardens, asking them what their favorite annuals and herbaceous perennials were in the trials. Everyone's favorite annual was zinnia 'Swizzle Cherry & Ivory', which also was in the top 10 performers. The most popular herbaceous perennial was *Rudbeckia* 'Prairie Sun' with 'Katherine Woodbury' daylily coming in second.

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It was a challenging year for winter hardiness trialing of herbaceous perennials. Last winter was dry with freeze/thaw cycles during October – January, followed by –20F temperatures without snow cover. If any plants didn't die from desiccation or the freezing/thawing actions, then they were hard-pressed to survive the cold without snow cover for insulation. Then the spring weather of an unusually cold and rainy May caused many fall-flowering (short day) perennials to come into flower. For instance, all garden chrysanthemums that over-wintered were in full flower in late June and early July. The hot July and August temperatures caused heat delay in autumn-flowering perennials. Our top-performing perennial again this year was *Artemisia schmidtiana*, a short, ground-hugging wormwood with silver foliage. This continues to flower twice during the year. New perennials that are being tested include the *Phlox* 'Volcano' series that sport dark green foliage and have mildew resistance. To see more about the winter hardiness trials for herbaceous perennials, visit our website <http://www.florifacts.umn.edu/>.

St. Paul **(USDA Heat Zone 5).**

1. ***Angelonia* 'Carita Purple'**—this angelonia has very strong stems (excellent for cutting) and rich purple flowers. It remained in continuous flower throughout the summer without deadheading!
2. ***Dichondra* 'Silver Falls'**—for a second year in a row, this silver-foliage, trailing groundcover provided interest in the gardens. This is a perfect complement for silver-flowered petunia 'Tidal Wave Silver' or silver-foliage herbaceous perennials, such as Sea Holly (*Eryngium*). It performs well in partial shade, in the garden or containers. An additional *Dichondra*, 'Emerald

- Falls', also performed well in our trials.
3. ***Cleome* 'Sparkler Mixture'**—an AAS winner, this remains a continuing favorite in the garden, due to their old-fashioned appeal, dwarf stature (when compared with the 'Queen' series), and decreased tendencies to reseed.
 4. ***Ornamental Pepper* 'Chilly Chili'**—continues with top performance year after year, both in containers and ground beds. It sets fruit early in the season and maturing fruit provide an analogous color scheme ranging from yellow, to orange and red as the fruits ripen. Its non-pungent fruit make it a safe plant for children. Excellent in combination with *Gaillardia* 'Sundance Bicolor' or *Celosia* 'Fresh Look Red' in containers, baskets, or ground beds.
 5. ***Ornamental Millet* 'Purple Majesty'**—an excellent maroon grass to create focal points or backdrops. The flower stalks are great cut flowers, either fresh or dried. Encourage your customers to leave these in the landscape through the winter for interest and to attract birds.
 6. ***Zinnia* 'Profusion Cherry'**—a series that has been popular due to its profusion of flowers throughout the hot, dry summer months and powdery mildew tolerance.
 7. ***Petunia* 'Tidal Wave Silver'**—this aggressive, fast-growing petunia continues to perform well in all conditions for northern gardeners. Stand back, as this will surround your feet before you can even move. It has excellent performance in large hanging baskets (by itself!) or ground beds. Give it plenty of room!
 8. ***Begonia*, *Hiemalis* type, 'Barkos'**—rich red colors and continuous flowering created a delight in the shade trials this year. Definitely a winner in the

- garden or containers.
9. ***Zinnia* 'Swizzle Cherry & Ivory'**—a delightful new bicolored series that has renewed interest in zinnias. These delighted visitors throughout the season with their prolific flowers and unique bi-coloration. A great addition with other pink, red, or white annuals. Definitely a traffic-stopper in our trials!
 10. ***New Guinea Impatiens* 'Super Sonic Coral Ice 2003'**—this is a superb flower producer throughout the growing season.

Morris **(USDA Heat Zone 4).**

1. ***Celosia* 'Fresh Look'**—the red and yellow colors in this new series provide a refreshing alternative to celosias. The dwarf habit, floriferousness, and dark green foliage make this outstanding All America Selection winner a must for every garden.
2. ***Argyranthemum* 'Madiera Porto Santo'**—a more compact-growing plant than other *Argyranthemum*, this has medium-sized flowers with consistent flowering during the summer.
3. ***Calibrachoa* 'Starlette Sunset'**—this was the most outstanding *Calibrachoa* of all that were trialed this year. Truly an exceptional specimen for all characteristics.
4. ***Geranium* 'Caliente Coral'**—a bright and flashy, compact-growing interspecific geranium. Its color and charm make it a great container plant.
5. ***Petunia* 'Mini Whispers Purple'**—If you need a trailing effect, but don't have the room for larger flowered and aggressive plants, try this series! These were floriferous at all the MN test sites.
6. ***Lantana* 'Rose Glow'**—this is a vigorously-growing plant that maintains a very tightly-mounded habit.

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7. **Rudbeckia 'Cherokee Sunset'**—This AAS winner has large-sized, semi-double to double, flowers that come in a variety of sunset shades. It will flower until frost.
8. **Petunia 'Avalanche Lavender'**—as its name suggests, this will surpass trailing and spreading petunias, creating an avalanche of color that lasts all summer long.
9. **Dianthus 'Dynasty Purple'**—this series of interspecific dianthus provides a bright splash of color; these are great as cut flowers!
10. **Dianthus 'Dynasty Red'**

Grand Rapids (USDA Heat Zone 3).

1. **Petunia 'Jamboree Light Blue'**—this is a large-flowered, trailing series of petunia that will create itself as the center of

- attention. A noise-maker!
2. **Petunia 'Sweet Surprise Purple'**—as its name suggests, this petunia packs a surprise in flowers as the season progresses.
3. **Petunia, wave type 'Misty Lilac'**—a wonderful panoply of lilac tints & tones continuously unfold in this wave petunia that has remained a favorite since its recent introduction.
4. **Dianthus 'Amazon Rose Magic'**—this hybrid dianthus provides a colorful display of white, lavender, and rose flowers. Each stem is truly a bouquet that will delight any floral designer; it is an excellent cut flower.
5. **Begonia, Hiemalis type, 'Barkos'**—a great, deep red bouquet of intense flowers will brighten any shady corner or provide delightful accents in containers.
6. **Begonia 'Prelude Pink Improved'**—a wax begonia with

brilliant pink flowers and a deep yellow center of pollen. Spectacular in the garden or in containers.

7. **Begonia, Angelwing type, Dragon Wing 'Pink', 'Red'**—these seed-propagated begonias will wow your customers and friends when they see these in large containers or hanging baskets. Truly remarkable, continuously flowering begonias.
8. **Petunia 'Tidal Wave Silver'**—see description above.
9. **Perilla 'Magilla'**—foliage in this plant looks similar to basil, its close relative.
10. **Geranium Rocky Mountain 'White', 'Orange'**—a spectacular geranium that provided continuous flower power throughout the growing season, even without deadheading! Great for containers due to its compact habit, but does equally well in garden settings.

Planning for Growth and Managing the Transition

**A Two-Day Seminar
To Position Your Company
For Growth**

**Tuesday & Wednesday,
February 24-25, 2004**

PRESENTED BY

the MNLA Landscape Contractors Committee for all business owners and managers.

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MNLA at 651.633.4987 or
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The Program:

As a business owner, are you currently facing growth challenges? Do you find yourself saying "My company just isn't the same as it used to be" or "How come everyone keeps forgetting this is still my company (sometimes, including me)"? If yes, then chances are you've reached a pivotal point in your business's development – when it needs better business practices to successfully get to the next level. **Planning for Growth and Managing the Transition** is a program for owners and key decision makers whose businesses are moving beyond start-up into the growth phase of their development. It is designed to help you overcome your anxieties of moving from a "hands-on" to a more strategic role.

This two-day program will focus on examining and improving internal infrastructure. Specific topics include:

- What is growth - and how do you prepare for it
- The changing role of the founder
- Best practices for forming and managing partnerships
- Determining who should be your business advisors
- Developing a company culture and improving employee relations
- The Strategic Planning Process
- Legal issues
- Financing for growth

Participants will receive both a case study to read and a questionnaire to complete and return prior to the program. These will be used to aid discussion during portions of the program. Participants will also receive resources to assist them in the strategic planning process inside their own company.

The program will be presented by a team of instructors who have either successfully grown their own companies or have worked with companies going through transitional phases.