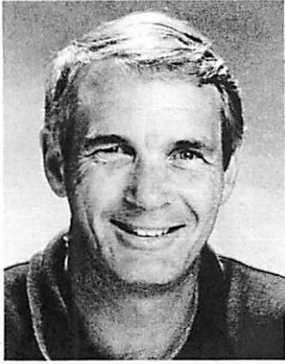


Coleus for Southeastern Growers and Landscapers

Results of two years of vegetative coleus trials at the University of Georgia

by Allan Armitage
University of Georgia



Everyone who visited appreciated the beauty of these plants; some drew a lot of oohs and ahs:

- * Alabama Sunset: an old favorite but still exceptional.
- * Ducksfoot: both purple and standard, low stature and good color retention in the purple.
- * Freckles: polka-dotted and always handsome.
- * Pat Martin: a big girl but very clean lines.
- * Pineapple: with yellow and light green foliage, very eye-catching.
- * Red Ruffles: a terrific red with green margins.
- * Solar Flare: all the Solars drew great attention but this I heard the most about.
- * Sunset: a more compact variety with terrific foliage all season.
- * Thumbellina: unique habit, good color made her a favorite.

The recent edition of *Southern Living* magazine, the garden voice of Virginia to Missouri and south to Florida and Texas, featured the mighty coleus within their garden pages. This would probably not be worth mentioning, except the magazine reaches hundreds of thousands of consumers and the article shows how far the lowly coleus has risen.

I also wrote about the new coleus available to growers in a recent issue of *Greenhouse Grower Magazine*, and many of you have visited the gardens to see them for yourselves. The result of these activities was that many people sent me letters asking about this variety and that, complaining of the name confusion or berating me for leaving out "their" plant.

With the exception of the cultivars of the Solar series, many of these cultivars may be presently grown under three or four different names. Jerry Parsons, a fine Extension horticulturist in San Antonio, Texas, was particularly upset with me. He told me in no uncertain terms that all the Sunlovers were already available and have been for years in Texas, and that I need to check more carefully.

I have probably messed up again this time, leaving out favorites or mixing up names, but I hope the names I have used will be adopted nationally.

With the help of George and Louise Griffith of Hatchett Creek Farm in Orlando, Florida, and a number of growers in Georgia, I soon had more than 30 varieties of vegetative coleus growing in the greenhouse. In general, all the coleus are relatively easy to propagate and grow, so the

garden evaluation took on even more significance.

Everyone who visited was steered to the coleus and opinions were not difficult to elicit. The main information I tried to obtain was their propensity to flower (don't want those useless things), their mature height and, of course, their overall performance.

They were all planted in full sun at the Horticulture Gardens and evaluated every two weeks. Since we had lots and lots of heat and no rain this summer, they were surely given the stress test.

What We Worked With: Making Sense of the Chaos

We received from growers or our own stock the following series and independents: Sunlover Series (8

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cultivars), Solar Series (9 cultivars), Ducksfoot Series (2 cultivars) and 8 independents. We didn't receive any of the new Texas material ('Plum Parfait' and 'Burgundy Sun'), but I understand it is very good indeed.

The data was taken every two weeks from June to September. The height was measured in late July and represents a mature height. This summer was particularly hot and plants likely were taller here than they may have been farther north. Most of these coleus flowered very little in the summer, except those marked as heavy flowerers. However, flowering started to occur in late August and September for nearly all of them.

Availability

The Sunlover Series is available through distributors and independent growers, particularly available in Georgia.

The Solar Series, which has been developed through Hatchett Creek Nursery in Gainesville, Florida, and is presently being trademarked; it should be available through distributors in the winter of 1996.

The independents are also carried by national distributors and also grown by many growers. 

Help Wanted : Full time position available immediately at fast growing perennial nursery. Must have certified pesticide license; clean motor vehicle record mandatory. Need dependable person who has a good work ethic. Main job would be pesticide and herbicide application, some delivery work required as well as other nursery-related jobs as the need arises. Salary commensurate with experience and benefits available.

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