

NEW AND BETTER ANNUAL FLOWERS

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Each year new varieties of annual flowers are introduced. Some of these are distinctly better than existing varieties but all must be tested for a few years in order to determine their permanent value for our gardens. Among the newer and better types grown and tested in The Pennsylvania State University Test Garden in 1956 are the following:

Ageratum, Blue Mink, a tetraploid with light blue flowers and vigorous compact growth. The height is uniform, 15 to 18 inches and the flower production is excellent from July until frost. Flower clusters are 2 to 3 inches across with 3 or 4 clusters per stem.

The Bouquet types of Asters are especially noteworthy. These are narrowly upright varieties to about 30 inches with many cuttable stems per plant. These are available in a wide color range, white, pink, rose, crimson, azure blue, and purple. The flowers are compact, 2½ to 3 inches in diameter. *Powder Puffs* is a mixture of the various colors of the Bouquet type.

Another group of Asters giving excellent performance are the Ball varieties. These have fully double flowers and are available in a wide range of colors. Flowering is early, beginning in July, and production is heavy with 8 to 15 long stemmed flowers per plant. Flowers are 2¾ to 3½ inches in diameter. Vigor is excellent with a height of 30 to 40 inches.

Celosias have been gaining in popularity as garden subjects during the last few years. *Toreador* is

an outstanding variety of the cristate type with bright red flowers. The flower heads may reach 6 to 9 inches across and are borne on stiffly erect stems. Many side branches also are formed which produce somewhat smaller flower heads. Growth is very uniform, with plants about 15 inches in height. The rich color, excellent production, and uniformity of growth make this an outstanding variety.

Red and Gold Celosia is an unusual novelty of the cristata type. A single flower head may have both colors with a sharp line of demarcation between the red and gold. The flower heads are large, 4 to 6 inches across and the plants are very uniform in habit, reaching a height of 10-12 inches.

Another unusual *Celosia* is *Dwarf Florist Type*, Choice Mixed. It is a cristata type with pink, yellow, orange, and red colors. The outstanding feature is its dwarf habit, growing only 6 to 8 inches.

Forest Fire is a new *Celosia* of the plume type. The plants reach a height of about 18 inches and are uniform in habit. The color is bright scarlet and the plummy flower clusters are about 6 inches long. Production is heavy, making a solid color display.

Among the *Marigolds*, the cupid types are very uniform in habit, reaching a height of 12 to 14 inches. Each plant is compact and bushy, covered with fairly large flowers, 1½ to 1¾ inches. The bright color and uniform habit makes it very showy.

Several varieties of the dwarf French double *Marigold* are excellent, although they are not all new. *Rusty Red* continues as a very colorful variety with mostly red flowers but with many gold. The habit is very uniform, 25 to 26 inches in height, and flower production is heavy, flowers 1½ to 2¼ inches. *Perfect Beauty* has very double flowers, orange with a red ring at the base. It is similar to *Harmony* but habit and flower form are more uniform. *Lemon Drop* is an excellent, very dwarf yellow variety, while *Sunkist* also very dwarf has orange flowers. *Tangerine* is another orange, grows considerably taller.

Cracker Jack is a new tall African *Marigold* mixture with carnation type flowers. The colors are orange, yellow, and gold. Plants are very vigorous, reaching a height of 36 to 38 inches. Flowering is heavy with flowers 2¼ to 4 inches across. The outstanding feature of this mixture is its earlier flowering which begins in early August. *Fluffy Ruffles* continues as an excellent large orange carnation flowered variety with petals somewhat ruffled. *Glitters* and *Mammoth Mum* are very good chrysanthemum flowered varieties with bright yellow flowers.

Petunias are one of the most popular annuals. The F₁ hybrids are replacing the open pollinated varieties with multiflora types giving excellent performance. The multifloras are noted for their uniform habit and heavy flower production. Their flowers are single with a plain edge. *Pale Face* and *Summer Snow* are outstanding white varieties. Both have excellent flower production but *Pale Face* has somewhat heavier flowering and the plants are a little larger. Another difference is that *Pale Face* has a slightly yellowish throat while *Summer Snow* does not.

Mohawk is rose pink with heavy flower production. The color is slightly darker than *Pink Sensation* but not quite as dark as *Rose Charm*. *Dream Girl* and *Cover Girl* are other good pink varieties.

Sioux, *Gypsy*, *Linda*, and *Silver Medal* are salmon varieties of superior quality. *Sioux* is new and is a deep reddish salmon. *Gypsy* is similar in color but smaller and more dwarf in size. *Linda* and *Silver* are soft salmon pink, similar in appearance but *Linda* is more dwarf.

Red Satin and *Commanche* are scarlet. Both are heavy flower producers with flowers 2 to 2¼ inches across, and both are uniform in habit but *Red Satin* seems to be an improvement over *Commanche* in uniformity. Color of both is brilliant and showy.

Another group of *Petunias* which are increasing in importance is the F₁ large flowered fringed varieties (F₁ hybrid *grandiflora*). One of the most recent introductions is *Fire Dance*, a scarlet red with a yellow throat. The flowers are large, 3 to 3½ inches across with a fringed margin. The color is very bright, but fades slightly with age. *Fire Gleam* is another scarlet red but without the yellow throat. The color is very attractive but brighter than that of *Fire Dance*. The flower production is good on both, but the flowers hold up better on *Fire Gleam*. *Prima Donna* is pink with deep rose in center and along the veins. *Ballerina* is a heavily ruffled salmon. *La Paloma* continues as the best white of this class. *Crusader* is brightly striped, red and white. The amount of red and white is variable with some flowers entirely, or nearly all red or all white but the color effect is very striking.

The semi-dwarf type of *Snapdragons* are very useful for bedding, although too short for cutting. *Gloria*, *St. George*, and *Flaming Scarlet* are outstanding varieties of this type. They grow to about 15 inches, have flower spikes of 4 to 4½ inches, and are very uniform in habit. *Gloria* is deep rose red, *St. George* — scarlet salmon, and *Flaming Scarlet* — bright crimson scarlet. Among the tall growing types, the colossal strains are excellent. They have strong sturdy stems, grow to a height of about 36 inches, and have long spikes of large flowers. They are especially suited for cutting but also are good for bedding. A complete color range is available. Other tall types are the new F₁ hybrids. These are strong and sturdy growers with 7-inch spikes, and are usually a little more uniform in height than other tall varieties. Good colors are pink, rose, white, orchid, yellow, and red hybrids.

Dwarf Crimson Ten Week Stock is quite uniform in growth, 15 to 18 inches with a high percentage of double flowers. An average of 8 or 9 flower spikes per plant can be expected with a length of 7 inches.

The giant cactus flowered types of *Zinnia* are adding new interest in these flowers. *Kismet* and *Apricot* are new varieties. *Kismet* is orange salmon while *Apricot* is apricot pink. Both have very attractive flowers, 3 to 4½ inches across, but plants are rather dwarf, growing only 20 to 24 inches. *Blaze* is an excellent orange scarlet and *Ice Cream* is light cream. The flowers of *Blaze* are strongly cactus type but those of *Ice Cream* are only mildly so. Both are good color additions and produce well.