

NOTES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY ARBORETUM:

Annual and Perennial Plant Performance

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The All America Trials, located at the University of Kentucky Arboretum, are the focus of my effort to evaluate new and different herbaceous plants for Kentucky. In addition to these trials, I try to grow some plants that are new or unfamiliar to me or the Arboretum staff. While it is a goal to have something new each season, some of the tried and true cultivars are usually grown for class purposes as well as the enjoyment of the general public.

The following are some comments on how a number of plants fared this season.

All America Selection Winners

Zinnia 'Profusion Orange' and 'Profusion Cherry' - **GOLD MEDAL WINNERS** - This distinction is reserved for a breeding breakthrough. These two plants have earned this distinction for their foliar disease tolerance. Everything you read about these plants in the press or trade magazines is true of their performance in Kentucky. **Great plants!** Visitors to the Arboretum have made many favorable comments. Plants produce mounds of single blooms that require no deadheading.

Begonia 'Pin-up-Flame' - A tuberous rooted begonia with bicolor blooms. It has to have shade for best performance, and since we still don't have a great deal of shade at the Arboretum, the performance in our garden may not be completely up to par. Bloom size is 2 to 4" in diameter and plants reach a height of 10-12 inches.

Tritoma 'Flamenco' - The claim to fame is that this perennial plant will bloom the first season from seed. It did. Garden performance after that is equal to other Tritomas.

Marigold 'Bonanza Bolero' - Touted as unique because of the irregular gold and red bicolor pattern.

Osteospermum 'Passion Mix' - Press information states flower size is 2 to 2 1/2 inches, and the plant reaches a height of 12 to 18 inches. Plants are drought tolerant. This year they lasted all season and looked great. Plants were 8 to 10 inches. Although it did not rate high on my list the first season, this plant is worth another look.

Portulaca 'Sundial Peach' - Great color and large blooms. Garden performance equal to other portulacas.

Verbena 'Quartz Burgundy' - It is a very nice verbena. The problem with many garden verbenas is all the deadheading necessary to keep them vigorous. 'Quartz Burgundy' does not require that maintenance.

Proven Winners - (Donated by Pleasant View Gardens)

Cobbity Daisies 'Summer Angel', 'Butterfly', and 'Sugar n'Ice' - These were somewhat of a disappointment. Plants were set out with flowers in full bloom and additional buds set. After the first flush of bloom 'Summer Angel' and 'Sugar n'Ice' never produced any additional blooms. 'Butterfly' did flower again in late August, but was not prolific.

Diascia 'Elliot's Variety' - We have tried to grow *Diascia* before. We were not successful then and we were not successful with this cultivar. With the loss of these plants, *Diascia* now has two strikes against it in my book.

Anagallis 'Skylover' - A prostrate plant with blue blooms. This plant was not very exciting, but I'm not sure we did not have this in an unfavorable location. It is on the list to try again.

Million Bells 'Trailing Pink', 'Cherry Pink' and 'Trailing Blue' - All were great in containers but were slow to grow and produce blooms in our ground beds. All began to produce a great show late in the season, so the problem with this plant may have been the gardeners rather than the plant. We will evaluate these plants again next year.

Verbena 'Temari Violet', 'Temari Bright Pink', 'Temari Red' - Great! Pick a color and grow lots. No need to deadhead. Bloomed all season. Generally 6 to 8 inches with a wide spread.

Odd Lots

Salvia 'Coral Nymph' - This plant was grown in the Arboretum two years ago and got a lot of attention. Plants produce light pink spike blooms all season. There was some reseeding, but germination was too late the following season to either be an advantage or a problem. Plants 18 to 20 inches.

Salvia 'White Nymph' - Since 'Coral Nymph' was so attractive it made sense to try 'White Nymph'. It blooms all season, and is more robust than 'Coral Nymph'. Plants may reach 48 inches in height. It was in the wrong location to show it to its best advantage, but it looks like a plant worthy of attention. 'White Nymph' will be a "back of the border" or an annual hedge in the Arboretum next year.

Cuphea x purpurea 'Firefly' - Not real showy from a distance, but this plant produced blooms all season. Plants were 18 to 24 inches tall. The bloom color is hard to describe. Depending on the light, they were pink to red with a blue or purple tinge. Plants were grown in a location where they were overwhelmed by the *Salvia leucantha* planted behind them. 'Firefly' needs to be grown again and needs to be planted in a less crowded location to be adequately evaluated.

Lobelia 'Fan Scharlach' and 'Fan Tiefrosa' - Think in terms of *Lobelia cardinalis* in various shades. Plants appear to be quite hardy here and offer a range of colors. They bloom around mid season and could be quite popular in a perennial border. They tolerate full sun and don't seem to have any special moisture requirements.

What to Look for Next Season

The following plants are being evaluated for their annual garden performance as well as their potential as perennial plants in this

area. Since this is the first season I have provided brief catalog descriptions, I will reserve judgement about performance in this area until next season.

Salvia greggii 'Raspberry Royale' - (Zone 6) A hybrid of *S. greggii* x *S. lemmonii*. Blooms heavy in spring, sporadically during the summer and heavy bloom in the fall. Plants were 18 to 20 inches this season.

Salvia guaranitica - (Zone 7) Dark blue flowers on 36 inch plants. Begins show mid season.

Salvia guaranitica 'Black and Blue' - (Zone 7) Very similar to *Salvia guaranitica* but the calyx is black. Growth habit and performance similar. Drew attention because of the touch of black on the bloom.

Salvia leucantha - Not hardy and blooms very late in the season. When in bloom the display is spectacular. Can get extremely tall (4 to 5 feet) and may require staking.

Salvia 'Maraschino' - (Zone 6) A hybrid between *S. grahamii* and *S. microphylla*, it is supposed to be one of the hardiest. Cherry red blooms produced sporadically through summer and then heavy in the fall.

Salvia microphylla 'Wild Watermelon' - (Zone 7) Produces large pink flowers in spring and fall. May be more cold hardy.

Salvia puberula 'Hidalgo' - (Zone 7) This 3' tall x 3' wide bushy sage sprawls in the garden. Bright pink fuzzy flowers are produced late in the season.

Salvia uliginosa - (Zone 6) Up to 55 inches. An upright plant that produces sky blue flowers from spring through fall. Foliage has a rather strong aroma but that can be overlooked because of the display. **Quite a show.**

All of the following are being compared to *Verbena* 'Homestead' for garden performance.

Verbena 'Abbeville' (Zone 7b) Consistent violet blooms throughout season.

Verbena 'Batesville Rose' - (Zone 7b) Magenta blooms, very vigorous.

Verbena canadensis 'Greystone Daphne' - (Zone 5) Pink, lavender blooms that may not produce a continuous show.

Verbena canadensis 'Lilac Time' - (Zone 5) Very light lilac color. Produced continuous show.

Verbena peruviana - (Zone 6) Brilliant red blooms from spring through summer.

Verbena 'Snowflurry' - (Zone 5) Heavy flowering in spring and fall.

Verbena tenera 'Sissinghurst' - (Zone 7b) Coral pink flowers. Produces continuous show.

Wildlife Favorites

Rabbits' Choice

Surfinia Petunias - Surfinia 'Blue Vein' and 'Pink Vein' were safe in containers but gone in a flash from the ground beds. They must be more flavorful than 'Purple Wave'. Surfinias didn't last 24 hours and 'Purple Wave' never had a nibble.

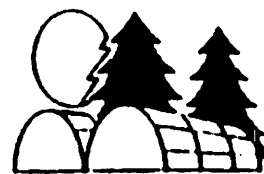
Gazanias - There were six different cultivars in the AAS trials. Not one plant survived the feeding frenzy.

Chipmunks' Choice

Geraniums - They like the roots and they don't care which cultivar they get. They pull the plants out of the ground and munch away. I don't think I would have believed it if I hadn't watched them do it.

If you are interested in expanding your product line, be sure to visit the University of Kentucky Arboretum each season. The All America Trials change each season. Potential winners from the 1998 trials may not be introduced for several years. Viewing the trials each season may help you determine future plant trends.

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