

## UT Gardens 2014 Best & Beautiful Plants

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**Information is also posted on:**

UT Gardens website at <http://utgardens.tennessee.edu/>

UT Gardens Jackson at <http://west.tennessee.edu/ornamentals/>

### Top Annuals of 2014

**Best in Show – Canna Cannova® Series** - A seed-grown canna that was most impressive. It was early to bloom, had vigorous growth and uniform height. Unlike some other seed grown cultivars it developed multiple shoots early which allowed for an abundance of blooms. The vibrant flower colors were outstanding, and with a long blooming season (till frost) this series created quite the flower power display. Ideal for the landscape or as a large container plant, topping out at 4' tall. This canna had it all. We trialed three colors: '**Cannova Yellow**', '**Cannova Rose**', and '**Cannova Red Shades**'. All were outstanding. **Ball Ingenuity**

**Best New Variety – Cuphea Vermillionaire™** - Red-orange, tiny cigar-like flowers set against dark green foliage covered this vase-shaped plant to form a mass of color. Matured to 18-24" tall. A very heat and drought tolerant plant that attracted bees and hummingbirds. **Proven Winners**

**Best Repeat Variety – Celosia 'Arrabona'** - A plume-type celosia with neon red-orange flower color and great branching on a sturdy plant that provided non-stop color throughout the season. **PanAmerican Seed**

### Top Twenty (alphabetical)

**Angelonia Archangel™ Dark Rose** – Perfect for the South. Angelonia loved the heat and tolerated humidity and drought. This multi-branching plant had strong erect stems that provided sturdy support for the flower spikes. The beautiful, rich, deep color was still bright enough to stand out in the landscape. **Ball Floraplant**

**Begonia Pegasus™** - Vigorous foliage plant that added unique color and texture to shade containers and landscapes. The large, distinctive, glossy palmate leaves had a dark, blue-green background with contrasting silver between the leaf veins. Reaching 14-18" tall, this plant gave our shady spots a lush, plush, tropical feel. **Proven Winners**

**Calibrachoa Superbells® Cherry Red Improved** – Talk about a color that popped! The bright, hot, neon

blooms covered the plant all season long. Added pizzazz to mixed containers and was a showstopper when used alone. **Proven Winners**

**Capsicum 'NuMex Easter'** - The small pointed fruits of cream, orange and purple grew well above the foliage and covered this medium-sized, 8-10" mounding plant. **Johnny's Selected Seeds**

**Catharanthus (Vinca)** – All of our vincas performed well in each trialing location. The focus this year was on selections with a white center. **'Titan Lavender Blue Halo'** and **'Titan Rose Halo'** from **PanAmerican Seed** and **'Vitesse Lavender Morn'** and **'Vitesse Rose Morn'** from **Floranova** were our top choices.

**Cleome Pequeña Rosalita™** - A more compact version of the top-performing **Senorita Rosalita®**, **Pequeña Rosalita** had excellent branching, wonderful flower power and was more long-lasting than cleomes of the past. The sturdy stems and shorter form decreased the tendency of lodging or splitting apart. **Proven Winners**

**Coreopsis 'Sunshine Suzy'** - Non-stop, bright yellow blooms, that didn't fade or wash out as they aged, made this compact (12-16"), low-maintenance plant exceptional. **Proven Winners**

**Fragaria 'Toscana'** - This ornamental strawberry had showy pink blooms set against large dark-green foliage. Cascading habit made it well-suited for containers. **Fleuroselect**

**Lobularia Dark Knight™** - Delicate, deep purple blooms on feathery foliage made this alyssum perfect for the front of the border. Kept blooming well into the heat of summer before flowering slowed down. **Proven Winners**

**Impatiens Big Bounce™** and **Bounce™** were new series of interspecific impatiens hybrids that performed fantastically in morning sun and afternoon shade. Covered in blooms all season, both series came in a great palette of colors with no evidence of disease problems. **Big Bounce™** was more vigorous reaching 18-24" in height, while **Bounce™** was about half that. Both had a mounding habit that was well suited for landscape, container, or hanging basket use. **Selecta**

**Passiflora Aphrodites Purple Nightie™** - Very vigorous vine that needed room to grow. Prolific bloomer in that it was filled with flowers at varying stages of growth throughout the season which made for a constant succession of open flower blooms. **Proven Winners**

**Pelargonium (Geranium) 'Pinto Premium White to Rose'** - This 2013 AAS bedding plant winner was a beautiful geranium from seed. Florets that darkened from white to pink to rose as they aged resulted in one flower head with multiple complementary colors. Large blooms were long-lasting on strong stems above dark green foliage. **Goldsmith**

**Pennisetum Graceful Grasses® 'Sky Rocket'** – Thin, variegated green and white blades and show-stopping seed heads made this indeed a "graceful grass". Plumes began to appear in July making this annual fountain grass an ideal specimen plant in large containers or in mass plantings in the landscape. Vigorous but not too tall, topping out at 3-4'. **Proven Winners**

**Petunia Supertunia® Indigo Charm** and **Morning Glory Charm - Indigo Charm** displayed uniform flower mounds and a profusion of small, rich, purple blooms that seemed to be made of velvet. **Morning Glory Charm** had a white throat and the same small blooms as Indigo Charm that stood up well to wind and

rain - making it ideal for containers and landscapes and as a substitute for calibrachoa. **Proven Winners. Tidal Wave™ Cherry** – This vigorous seed-grown selection has been around for several years, but its eye-catching, bright neon color and mounding habit (up to 24”) made it ideal for the landscape.

#### **PanAmerican Seed**

**Portulaca RioGrande™ series** - Large flowers in clear, bold, vibrant colors formed a dense mat that tolerated heat and drought. We evaluated **Magenta, Yellow, Orange** and **White** and all were exceptional. Marketed for hanging baskets, we planted ours in the ground and they were an eye-catching ground cover for the front of the bed. **Ball Floraplant**

**Salvia Ablazin™ series** - With flower spikes held upright on strong sturdy stems, these 18-24’ plants were prolific bloomers all summer. Non-stop color was provided whether dead-headed or allowed to self-clean. Evaluated in two colors: **Tabasco**, a fire engine red, and **Purple**, a rich, velvety eggplant purple. Both were great bee and butterfly attractants. **Mystic Spires Blue**, a cross species, was a bit more vigorous with deep blue spikes and received the highest possible scores in both gardens. Very heat and drought tolerant and was the most visited plant by bees and butterflies in the garden all summer. **Proven Winners**

**Scaevola Pink Wonder™** - Great ground cover for the front of the bed. Continuously blooming plants were heat and drought tolerant. A bit more compact than we’ve seen in the past. Great pink color that was rich enough to not wash out in the sunlight. **Proven Winners**

**Solenostemon (Coleus) Color Blaze® Lime Time™** - Vigorous sun-loving coleus in a bright chartreuse color that didn’t scorch in the sun. Great foliage plant for pairing with any number of other foliage or bloom colors to form striking combinations. **Proven Winners. Kong™ Lime Sprite** – Brighten up the landscape with this large-leafed, seed grown coleus that had lime-green, wide margins and burgundy-red centers. We were successful with this very striking plant both when grown in the shade as in Knoxville or in almost full sun as in Jackson. **Ball Premier**

**Verbena EnduraScape™ series** – Very heat tolerant. Did not cycle in and out of bloom like many older cultivars but instead flowered continuously. We evaluated **Blue, Dark Purple, Hot Pink, Lavender**, and **Red** – all with great rich color retention even as individual flowers passed their prime. **Ball FloraPlant**

**Zinnia ‘Profusion Double Hot Cherry’** – As in past years, Profusion zinnias continued to be one of the top choices in our trials. This year’s top pick was a 2013 AAS winner that was bright, deep, hot pink whose vibrant flower faded to a pleasant, softer tone as it aged. All the **Profusion** cultivars massed together well, were of uniform height, bloomed prolifically till frost, and were disease resistant. **Sakata / AAS Winner**

## **Promising Perennials**

**Echinacea 'Glowing Dream', Glowing Dream Coneflower** - Terra Nova nurseries said “This compact, floriferous coneflower has *E. tennesseensis* breeding, which imparts a great habit and a great crown.” We certainly found this to be true. The flowers were a glowing, deep, fuchsia -red and were produced in abundance in May and June while the compact but not overly short stems were strong enough to hold the blooms upright. A fabulous landscape plant with great flower color, habit, and long bloom time.

**Echinacea 'Colorburst Orange', Colorburst Orange Coneflower** – Beautiful, anemone type double flowers opened with centers that aged from dark green to lime-green, and then to orange remaining attractive with each stage. 28" tall and 22" wide. Excellent vigor. Flowers are very large on extra strong stems and well branched plants.

**Echinacea 'Secret Glow', Secret Glow Coneflower** - This Terra Nova selection's large number of unique, school bus-yellow double flowers made it stand out in the garden. The sheer number and weight of the flowers made it somewhat floppy as compared to 'Glowing Dream', and the stalks can lodge slightly after heavy rains, but compared to older double cultivars it is a winner.

**Rudbeckia fulgida var. sullivantii 'Little Goldstar' – Little Goldstar black-eyed Susan** - This introduction from Jelitto Seeds is thought to be an improvement over 'Goldsturm', an industry favorite for years. It was much more proportional and compact, standing just knee-high at 14-16" tall and wide. It offered more blooms on a tighter habit and was excellent for containers as well as the sunny border. Loads of yellow daisy-like flowers surrounded a prominent brown cone that, in winter, provided a healthy snack for birds. Flowers can be used for fresh or dried floral bouquets and were very attractive to butterflies and bees in the summer.

**Tetrapanax papyrifer 'Steroidal Giant', Rice Paper Plant** - For a truly tropical look, this cultivar of giant rice paper plant couldn't be beat. It was all about the big and bold foliage. Can make a dramatic show if planted in combination with hydrangea and most any other plant. In Tennessee, expect one season's growth to be about 10-12' tall and just as wide. The brown hairy stalks were clothed with giant 3-5' wide, fuzzy, castor bean-shaped leaves. The root suckered underground, although less than the typical form, and fortunately it was easy to remove. Thrived in full-sun to partial-shade and a moist but well-drained soil.

## Incredible Edibles

**'Juliet' Tomato, Solanum lycopersicum 'Juliet'** – An extremely productive, indeterminate, hybrid plum-shaped cherry tomato. It had good flavor and the fruit did not crack. The disease resistant plants stayed green and full all season with fruit ripening almost daily.

**Brazelberries® 'Peach Sorbet' Blueberry, Vaccinium hybrid** – This is a relatively new blueberry cultivar from Fall Creek Nursery's Brazelberry collection. Plump, sweet blueberries were only part of its appeal. New growth was a nice variety of peach, pink and pale green and fall colors ranged from purple to red. The robust compact plants stayed under 2' wide and 3' tall and were perfect for containers.

**Mizuna Mustard, Brassica rapa japonica** - Mizuna is a mild tasting Asian green that can be eaten fresh, steamed, sautéed, or boiled. It grew quickly from seed (20-40 days) and performed well in both summer heat and winter chill. In the UT Kitchen Garden we have had some survive temperatures into the low 20's.

**'Prevail' Bush Bean, Phaseolus vulgaris** - This bush bean stood up to the heat of summer better than any other variety we have grown. It produced multiple crops of mildly sweet, tender, uniform pods and showed good disease resistance. The disease resistant characteristic meant greater productivity as well as a longer lasting aesthetic value.

## Tremendous Trees and Shrubs

***Ilex* x 'Whoa Nellie' - Gold Nellie R. Stevens Holly** – 'Whoa Nellie' was found by Dr. Mike Dirr on the Univ. of Georgia campus and named by Tony Avent. New growth is bright gold and does not burn in the sun while the inner growth retains a dark green color. In 8 to 10 years it should make a dense 12' tall by 8' wide pillar in a garden with average soil. 'Whoa Nellie' will produce an abundance of bright red berries when a male pollinator is grown in the same area. 'Edward J. Stevens' works well as a pollinator. 'Whoa Nellie' works well as a focal point and will make a nice addition to any mixed privacy screen. Siting in full sun will insure its best golden color. Zone 6

***Cercis canadensis* 'Little Woody'** - 'Little Woody' is one of the most distinctive compact eastern redbuds introduced to date. Distinguished by its thick, blue-green, large rounded heart-shaped leaves that develop with extremely short internodes along the stems it exhibits strong leaf texture and prominent veination. Before these leaves emerge in spring, its brown branches become covered with clusters of small sweetpea-like flowers of rosy pink. This graceful, compact tree with a vase-shaped canopy makes a unique and excellent specimen plant. Prefers partial to full-sun and a moist but well-drained soil. A moderately paced grower that reaches up to 6-8' tall and 8-10' wide.

***Betula nigra* 'Little King' Fox Valley™ River Birch** - A wonderful, dense and compact landscape-scale birch, more like an irregularly rounded-spreading large shrub than a tree, with interesting cinnamon colored bark; ideal size for use in a garden setting. Has dark green foliage throughout the season. The pointy leaves turn an outstanding yellow in the fall. This can be a high maintenance dwarf tree that will require regular care and upkeep, and should only be pruned in summer after the leaves have fully developed, as it may 'bleed' sap if pruned in late winter or early spring. Fox Valley River Birch will grow to be about 10' tall at maturity, with a spread of 12'. Performs best in full-sun to partial- shade.

***Juniperus chinensis* 'Angelica Blue'** - The bright blue color of the fine-textured foliage is intensified by the cool winter temperatures. Creates excellent texture and color contrast when mixed with dark green-foliaged plants. Prefers a well-drained soil and full sun. Grows 3-5' tall and 5-10' wide.

***Hydrangea paniculata* 'Silver Dollar'** - This *Hydrangea* has strong stems and dense, white flowers that flush to pink from summer through fall. This RHS Award of Garden Merit winner reaches 4-5' wide and 5-6' tall although it may potentially reach 8'. It is, though, more compact than some other cultivars of *H. paniculata*. Not patented. Prefers full-sun to partial-shade.

***Caryopteris* 'Snow Fairy' and Sunshine Blue®, Blue Mist Shrub** – Brighten up the landscape with these fall blooming shrubs that have wonderful foliage interest. 'Snow Fairy' has an almost pure white variegation along the leaf margins. Compact growth habit (to 24") with deer-resistant leaves that tolerates full sun to partial shade makes this a must-have for the garden. **Sunshine Blue®** is a bit larger (2-3') and has golden foliage that retains that color even in the heat of summer. Flowers on both are an amethyst blue and are great bee and butterfly attractants.

## Remarkable Roses

**Cinco de Mayo™** – A floribunda rose with multiple blooms that were varying degrees of smoky coral-pink to dusty lavender on one cluster. AARS 2009 Winner.

**'Good As Gold'** – A new introduction of hybrid tea that had a rich orange-gold to yellow-gold color that finished with a light margin of pinkish red.

**Pumpkin Patch™** - Unique bloom color opened from a copper colored bud to a caramel-orange bloom that then lightened with age.

**Vavoom™** - We included this floribunda again because it was consistently a visitor favorite and about as orange as you can get in a rose. A 'Big Orange' orange.

**Love and Peace™** - Another visitor favorite, this hybrid tea had a bushy habit resulting in lots of blooms of soft yellow and rich pink.

**Tahitian Treasure™** - *Rosa* 'Radtresure' – Introduced last year by Star Roses, this was a breakthrough in breeding as it is a grandiflora that performs like a landscape rose. Tried as a potential introduction in the UT Gardens, we had our eye on this rose for a couple of years. It was truly amazing, and we're excited it was introduced to the market. Outstanding re-bloomer with a beautiful, rich, pink bloom color, great flowering density, good growth habit, and very disease resistant. This rose has it all.