

UT Gardens 2016 Best Plants Report

Prepared by:

Dr. Susan Hamilton, Director of the UT Gardens
James Newburn, Assistant Director, Trials Coordinator
Jason Reeves, Research Horticulturist, UT Gardens-Jackson

Beth Willis, Trials Webmaster
Holly Jones, Kitchen Garden Manager

Information is also posted on:

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

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

Top Annuals

Best in Show: Capsicum (Ornamental Pepper) Sedona Sun – PanAmerican Seed - New! Add spice to the landscape with this wonderful new variety of spreading ornamental pepper. With a 12”-14” spread and 10”-12” height, this is an ideal landscape bedding plant. It is loaded with upright chili peppers that are above the foliage. Plants have fruits that are shades of yellow and orange at the same time for a bright summer display that transitions well into a great fall seasonal look.

Top Seed Cultivars: Vinca Titan® Really Red -PanAmerican A great new color added to this top performing vinca series. As with the other colors, Really Red is disease resistant, heat and drought tolerant and blooms earlier than some other cultivars. Rich, true red flower on very uniform plants makes it ideal for mass planting. **Capsicum ‘Hot Pops Purple’ –PanAmerican Seed - New!** Little purple and orange, pea-sized peppers are above the foliage and make for a showy display whether in a landscape bed or in a container.

Top Rooted Cutting Cultivars: Artemisia Quicksilver™ - Proven Winners - New! An absolutely wonderful foliage plant that pairs nicely with almost any flower color in the landscape bed or mixed container. Known by many as Dusty Miller, this plant has soft-textured, silver foliage and is drought and heat tolerant and this cultivar is uniform in its growth habit maintaining a low height of 8-10”.

Calibrachoa Superbells® Hollywood Star - Proven Winners – New! A bright fuchsia pink calibrachoa that is set off with a bright yellow throat surrounded by a band of deep purple. This selection for 2017 has also been bred for disease resistance. **Lantana Lucky™ Red - Ball FloraPlant – New!** Rich, deep red-orange color is an outstanding performer. Drought, deer, and disease resistant, this lantana was a pollinator attractant and thrived in the heat of summer, and, the color blended nicely into the fall landscape.

Top Series: Ipomoea, Sweet Caroline series - Proven Winners – These sweet potato vines love the heat and humidity so they thrive in our southern gardens. Sweet Caroline now has nine cultivars within the series with a variety of leaf shapes and colors: from heart-shaped to maple-leafed and lime-green to copper to in black color. Vigorous grower but takes hard pruning well if needed. **Vinca, Valiant™ series - PanAmerican/Keift** Bright, pure, consistent color makes this series a standout. Vigorous growth habit

and large flowers create mounds of color that can withstand almost anything nature throws at it. Very disease resistant, heat and drought tolerant in a wide range of colors.

Tried and True: Petunia Supertunia® Vista Bubblegum - Proven Winners - This visitor favorite always attracts a lot of attention because of the rich pink profusion of blooms on mounding and spreading plants which make it ideal for containers or landscape beds. Extremely tolerant of summer heat, humidity and drought this variety always performs well. **Canna 'South Pacific Scarlet'** is a 2013 All-America Selections ornamental seed winner valued for its heat tolerance, compact habit and uniform habit that still has us singing its praises.

Awesome Annuals

Angelonia – Always a winner for its heat and drought tolerance **Angelface® Perfectly Pink** from Proven Winners is new for 2017 and has a rich pink color that shows up even in bright sunlight. **Archangel™ Cherry Red** and **Archangel™ Blue Bicolor** from Ball FloraPlant have huge blooms.

Begonia – PanAmerican's **Megawatt™** series is outstanding because of the huge blooms on vigorous plants held up with sturdy stems. We tested **Megawatt™ Pink Bronze Leaf**, **Megawatt™ Rose Green Leaf**, and **Megawatt™ Red Green Leaf** and all performed well. Ideal in landscape beds, hanging baskets or containers.

Calibrachoa – Performing exceptionally well in Jackson were **Superbells® Coralberry Punch™** with its rich, coral margin and a dark throat with a yellow eye; and, **Superbells® Pomegranate Punch™** that is truly the color of pomegranates with a dark eye from Proven Winners. **StarShine™ Pink** from Selecta is a showstopper with a bright yellow star shape contrasting with a hot pink background. **Cabaret® Sky Blue** new from Ball FloraPlant was a beautiful soft yet rich lavender blue with a purple center with a pale yellow eye.

Canna - Cannova Mango is a new color in this series of seed grown, first-season flowering canna from Ball Ingenuity. Very manageable height of between 3-4' tall which unlikely to lodge making it a great landscaping choice. A great addition to the wonderful Cannova series.

Capsicum – Besides the varieties that garnished our top prizes this year some of our favorite ornamental pepper standouts from previous years still deserve recognition for their outstanding performance including: **Chilly Chili** and **Sangria** from PanAmerican, and **NewMex Easter** a 2014 AAS bedding plant winner, we valued the plants where multi-colored fruit stood up above the foliage.

Coleus – Always adding a great foliage color contrast to flowers in mixed containers, landscape beds, and large hanging baskets coleus are favorite companion plants. Ball FloraPlant had some outstanding new varieties including: **Inferno** in a russet-orange color; **French Quarter** with pink, burgundy and green classic leaf pattern; and **Ruby Slipper** in a solid velvety-red color.

Cyperus – For an exotic foliage plant for any landscape that can be used as a water plant or in ground we love **King Tut™** and **Prince Tut™** Egyptian papyrus from Proven Winners' Graceful Grasses® line. Strong stems hold sprays of fine-textured, hair like leaves up creating a sparkler, fountain effect. **Prince Tut™** reaches only about 2.5' about half of **King Tut™** which can get up to 4.5-5' tall.

Echinacea - Seed-grown varieties that flower the first year have made a big splash of the past several years garnering AAS awards and we find they perform well in heat and drought conditions. **'Cheyenne Spirit'** is a wonderful mix of colors that vary from purple to reds to soft-yellows and white. **'PowWow Berry'** will brighten any garden with its rose-purple flowers. Very floriferous with good branching habit and uniformity of height. **'Feeling Pink'** is a 2016 FleuroSelect Gold Medal winner and is a compact variety (about 20 inches) loaded with blooms. Bright rose-pink flowers contrast nicely with dark green foliage.

Impatiens - The **Big Bounce™** and **Bounce™** varieties of interspecific impatiens from Selecta thrive in sun and shade and are disease resistant to downy mildew. **Big Bounce™ Pink** and **Bounce™ Bright Coral** and **Bounce™ Violet 17** are all new colors within their respective series. They get their name because of their ability to bounce back after wilt.

Marigold - Taishan® marigolds received perfect scores in Jackson in west Tennessee. Valued for their shorter, stronger stems, and better branching. **Taishan® Yellow** and **Taishan® Orange** were evaluated along with **Taishan® Gold Improved** a new variety available from PanAmerican Seed.

Pentas – One of the best pollinator attractants in our gardens. Pentas is not only heat and drought tolerant but blooms till frost too. **'Graffiti Pink'** and **'Graffiti White'** from Benary Seed have been on the market for several years and are excellent varieties as always.

Petunia – New from Proven Winners is **Supertunia® Vista Fuchsia Improved**. Similar to the tried and true favorite **Vista Bubblegum** with its vigorous, mounding growth and season-long bloom but with a richer, darker pink color. Tolerates heat and humidity with never a lull in flower production. **ColorRush™ Pink** from Ball FloraPlant is valued for its vigor that hold up to wind, heat and rain. Also, available in **ColorRush™ Purple**. Selecta has a most unusual petunia in **Night Sky** which is a rich deep purple but speckled with white when temperatures are cooler in spring and fall. We had it in containers and it attracted a lot of attention.

Verbena - Superbena® verbenas from Proven Winners are rebloomers that are heat tolerant and ideal as spillers and fillers in containers. **Superbena® Royale Peachy Keen** and **Superbena® Royale Romance** (a wine red) are both new colors for 2017. The **EnduraScape™** series from Ball FloraPlant is valued for being heat tolerant, powdery mildew resistance, and is more likely to bloom continuously throughout the summer. **EnduraScape™ Magenta**, **EnduraScape™ Purple Improved** and **EnduraScape™ Pink Bicolor** are new color colors.

Vinca – Besides the **Valiant™** series designated in our "Top Series", **Titan®** series from PanAmerican is also a vigorous grower, prolific, bloomer, heat and drought resistant available in a variety of colors that will fit any scheme in a full-sun container or landscape bed. Along with **Titan® Red**, **Titan® Blush Improved** was also new this year. **Valient™** came in **Apricot**, **Burgundy**, **Lilac**, **Orchid**, **Punch**, and **Pure White** and all performed well.

Zinnia – Improvements in zinnia breeding include blooms holding their color longer before fading and larger bloom size. **Zahara®** from PanAmerican fits the bill on this and **XL Fire Improved**, **XL Yellow**, and **XL White** were top performers.

Promising and Proven Perennials:

Monarda Sugar Buzz® series - Sugar Buzz® beebalm. This new series from Walters Gardens offers short, compact plants growing to just 16-24 inches tall and wide that are perfect for the front of the border. Plants are covered in long-lasting flowers which are great pollinator attractors. These selections form domes of color with fat 2-inch-plus blooms on plants with candy names: **Cherry Pops**, **Lilac Lollipop**, **Grape Gumball** and **Bubblegum Blast**. As cultivars of a native species, they are easy to grow. They display above-average resistance to powdery mildew and prefer full sun. Hummingbirds, butterflies and bees are attracted to the plants' sweet nectar.

Sedum SunSparkler® series – Hybrid sedum. The SunSparkler® Sedum series is an exciting heat-tolerant group of sedums bred by Chris Hansen. They make first-class groundcover plants, ideal for mass planting, use in decorative containers, especially troughs, and are perfect for the front of a mixed border or rock garden. The collection includes **SunSparkler® 'Firecracker'**, **'Lime Zinger'**, **'Lime Twister'**, **'Blue Pearl'**, **'Cherry Tart'**, **'Dazzleberry'**, and **xSedoro 'Blue Elf'** (the first ever inter-generic hybrid between Sedum and Orostachys).

- **'Cherry Tart'** is noted for its super compact habit, growing only 6 inches high by 10 inches wide and producing cherry-red foliage and clusters of deep pink flowers in late summer. It is being touted as “perfect for a water-wise landscape” and for having the ability to retain its color all summer long unlike other sedums.
- **'Dazzleberry'** has impressive dusty-blue foliage and giant 9 inch raspberry flower heads. It grows 8 inches tall and 18 inches wide.
- **'Lime Zinger'** is a more compact sedum, growing only four inches high and spreading 18 inches wide but is unique because of its bright lime-green foliage which has a cherry-red picotee edge.
- **'Firecracker'** is a 6 inch tall groundcover with shiny cherry-red foliage from April thru November! Plants form 6” tall and 18” wide mounds of colorful foliage which combines superbly with other drought-proof perennials. Firecracker’s compact habit also allows for a multitude of uses including mixed container plantings on your deck, edging along walkways, and green roof
- **'Lime Twister'** is a variegated sport from 'Lime Zinger' which has cream-colored edges on every leaf. No sun scorching.
- **'Blue Pearl'** has intense blue foliage make this unique new selection a great choice for landscape or patio. Remains colorful all summer long, unlike other varieties. Large, contrasting hot pink flowers clusters dance above the foliage in late summer. Useful as colorful ground cover or feature in rock garden or container.
- **xSedoro 'Blue Elf'** has steel-blue tufted foliage rosettes and numerous lateral branches that elongate away from the center closely resemble the Orostachys parent. Grows to a very tight and ultra-compact height of only 3” tall and will reach 15” wide. Plants are smothered with hundreds of dark-pink flowers in late summer.

Penstemon Red Rock® - Outstanding disease resistant cultivar. Tolerated our heat, humidity and dry conditions. Rose-pink flower spikes with large individual flowers resulting in quite a show. Compact growth habit at 18-24” required no staking.

Tremendous Trees & Shrubs:

***Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium' – 'Aconitifolium' full moon maple.** A dwarf, multi-stemmed shrub or small tree which typically grows slowly to 8-10' tall. Valued for its sculptural form and incredible fall foliage display of orange to crimson colors. Requires lightly dappled shade in Tennessee. Plants perform poorly south of USDA Zone 7. Leaves will scorch in full sun in our hot mid-south summers. Prefers cool summer conditions so carefully select site. Not suited for west Tennessee conditions. Stake trunk for more erect growth or leave alone for spreading effect. Easily grown in average, medium moisture, well-drained soil. Use as specimen plant where form and foliage color are focal point. Landscape up-lighting will accentuate the sculptural form and brilliant fall foliage color.

***Acer rubrum* Redpointe® - Redpointe® Maple.** A rising star on the shade tree horizon. Tailored for today's streetscapes and landscapes, it's a heat resistant, vigorous growing, colorful choice for sustainable landscapes. Determined to be the top performer among seedlings selected in the J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. *Acer rubrum* breeding program it is a pest and disease resistant tree that is easily maintained. Demonstrated superior resistance to leaf chlorosis. Improved resistance to anthracnose, spider mites and leaf hoppers are among the attributes of this cultivar. Well-behaved, balanced growth eliminates the need for a lot of pruning and shaping to develop a symmetrical canopy. A straight, dominant central leader assures uniformity. Strong branch attachments with ideal angles mean that less labor is needed to develop a pyramidal street tree shape. Smaller and more refined than those of *Acer x freemanii*, leaves are deep green, heat-resistant and fresh looking all summer. Brilliant fall color appears early and is reliably bright red.

***Cryptomeria japonica* 'Gyokuryu' – 'Gyokuryu' Japanese Cedar.** A wonderfully mid-sized Japanese cedar that is ideal for a smaller landscape. Slowly forms a dense, irregular pyramid 5 to 10 feet tall and 3 to 7 feet wide. A great evergreen for use as a foundation plant, screen, mixed border, or single specimen.

Distylium - is a relative newcomer to the landscape industry, and the result of years of trials, selective breeding in an effort to come up with very worthy specimens that are evergreen, adaptable, and virtually immune to the majority of common pests and diseases. A hybrid from the witchhazel family, developed and bred to provide selections which have growth habits and sizes that fit a wide array of landscape uses. Noted for being pest and disease resistant, drought tolerant, wet soil tolerant, and will thrive in full sun to partial shade. Landscape uses include evergreen hedge, foundation plantings, containers, and single specimen. **'Vintage Jade'** is one of the lowest growing selections to just 2 feet tall and 5 feet wide with an arching, somewhat mounded habit; **'Cinnamon Girl'** grows 3 feet tall and 5 feet wide. Bronze coloration and foliage appearance is the main distinction that sets this selection apart; **'Blue Cascade'** is slightly more upright than other selections growing 3 feet and just as wide.

***Lagerstroemia indica* 'Royalty' – 'Royalty' crape myrtle.** A medium sized crape myrtle growing 6 feet tall and 8 feet wide, covered with panicles of crinkly royal purple blossoms in the summer. Green foliage turns orange-red in autumn. Dormant plant displays attractive gray-brown exfoliating bark on upright stems. Nice medium-sized shrub. Great for use in group plantings or single specimen.

***Lagerstroemia indica* 'Sacramento' – 'Sacramento' weeping crape myrtle.** A compact crape myrtle, growing to just 2 feet tall and just as wide. Its mounding, weeping habit makes it great as a ground cover or as a decorative container plant. It can also be used for boarder plantings and in mass. The rose-pink

clusters of blooms smother this super compact selection and are on display from late spring through summer. New growth pinched during the growing season will increase branchiness and flower number. Deadheading spent flowers will encourage a second flush of flowers!

***Liquidambar styraciflua* Happidaze™ (syn. 'Hapidell') – Happidaze American sweetgum.** Sweetgum is a beautiful tree but most homeowners won't grow it because of its messy fruits. Thanks to this fruitless selection, messy "gumballs" are no longer a problem. This is a beautiful tree too; the leaves turn lovely shades of burgundy and maroon in fall and mature specimens develop oval to rounded crowns with age. Grows 60-80 feet tall and 40-60 feet wide. Easily grown in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun. Intolerant of shade. Prefers deep, moist, fertile soils, but seems to tolerate a wide variety of soils.

***Viburnum nudum* 'Brandywine' – Possumhaw viburnum.** A deciduous viburnum whose glossy foliage turns dark maroon-red in fall. White flowers in spring which become clusters of vivid pink and blue berries in fall. It will have good berry set without a pollinator plant, but adding cultivar 'Winterthur' will really amp up the number of berries. Has good deer resistance and attracts birds. Grows 6 feet tall.

***Viburnum plicatum tomentosum* 'Summer Snowflake' – 'Summer Snowflake' doublefile viburnum.** A deciduous viburnum that is perfect for adding seasonal interest in the landscape. Use for spring flower, late summer red berries, and fall foliage. Perfect in a mixed border or a single specimen in the landscape. Has an upright growth habit which matures 5-8 feet tall. White lacecap-like flowers bloom in spring (late April-May), but continue to bloom sporadically through summer (hence the cultivar name) and sometimes into early fall. Show red berries in late summer. Fruit, a few flowers and autumn foliage color may all be simultaneously present in early fall making quite a show in the landscape. The dark green leaves turn burgundy red to purplish red in fall.

***Viburnum lantana* 'Variegatum' – Variegated lantana viburnum.** Dark green leaves are flecked with light green, chartreuse, white that add depth and interest to this slow growing 5-8 ft shrub that does best in afternoon or full shade to keep variegation prominent with no burning. Tolerates dry conditions. Fruit forms in clusters and ripens from red to black reminiscent of lantana which gives it its species name.

Incredible Edibles

Garlic Chives 'Geisha', *Allium tuberosum* 'Geisha'. With larger flower heads and wider leaves, this 2015 AAS winning variety outperformed the standard garlic chives in the UT kitchen garden this year. Flowers appear towards the end of the season and are hugely popular with honeybees.

Blackberry 'Triple Crown', *Rubus fruticosus* 'Triple Crown'. This thornless variety was released in 1997 through a joint breeding program with USDA-Beltsville and the Pacific West Agricultural Research Service and has become a standard for growers due to its outstanding flavor, productivity and vigor. It has proven to be sweeter and more productive than the other three varieties grown in the kitchen garden over the past four years.

Remarkable Roses

Dream Come True™ - grandiflora – One of the most stunning roses because of the pale yellow bloom that is edged with a ruby-red blush. This rose develops huge flowers atop long stems.

Firefighter® - hybrid tea - Honoring firefighters is especially poignant for us in Tennessee this year. This beautiful deep red hybrid tea was the first sponsorship rose of the 'Remember Me' garden fund – a program to honor and raise funds for 9/11 victims. An added bonus is the beautiful fragrance of this selection. A classic red rose with a classic rose smell.

Julia Child - floribunda – This was our favorite yellow rose this year. Our shrub was absolutely covered with blooms even in the hottest part of the year. Rich, buttery yellow clusters of blooms held their color well before slowly fading.

Good as Gold - hybrid tea – A favorite with the Beall Family Rose Garden interns in Knoxville this hybrid tea is as good as it gets. From the bud stage through its bloom period this rose is outstanding. A deep peach colored bud opens to a yellow-orange classic hybrid tea double bloom that then fades with hints of a deep- pink blush along the petal edges.

South Africa™ Sunbelt® grandiflora. A selection from the Kordes Sunbelt series that tolerates the heat and humidity of the South, this rose is a prolific bloomer with large blooms of dark golden yellow.