

University of Tennessee Gardens - Jackson

2021 Best & Beautiful Report

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This and the full trial results are available at:

west.tennessee.edu/ornamentals/

The University of Tennessee Gardens in Jackson trialed more than 200 varieties of annuals, perennials, vegetables, and herbs in 2021. Trials were planted during the month of May, and data was taken June - September. Overall, the growing season was good. High temperatures were below average and rainfall was above average. Supplemental overhead irrigation was used as needed.

Best in Show:

Calylophus Ladybird™ Series Lemonade, Sunflow (Proven Winners) – We love both in the Ladybird™ series and can't say enough good things about them. The feathery foliage provides a fine texture for the garden and is complemented by beautiful, yellow blooms. The cultivar Lemonade produces pale, lemon-yellow flowers that fade to a complementary peach color while the cultivar Sunflow produces bright, sunshine-yellow flowers that fade to a deeper, mustard yellow. Use the compact 4-8" tall plants that spread 18-24" at the front of your flower bed and these cheery flowers will brighten your day until frost.

Dipladenia Sundenia® Crimson (Suntory) – This proved a vigorous, climbing Dipladenia in our trials this season. The 2-3" diameter flowers have vibrant red petals with tubes that are yellow on the inside and white on the outside. With glossy, lush foliage they are beautiful used in a pot with a trellis.

Lantana Luscious® Citron (Proven Winners) – The Luscious® series of lantana has performed exceptionally well over the years with its nonstop flower power and ability to perform in heat and drought. The lemon-colored flowers stand out on lush, green foliage on 3' tall and wide plants. Unlike other lantana with uniform mound shapes, Luscious® Citron stands out with its random, upright spikes giving it a more natural look.

Pepper 'Candy Cane Chocolate Cherry' (PanAmerican Seed) – This pepper brings a delightful blend of ornamental appeal and culinary use. With variegated green and white leaves, immature green and white striped fruit, and ripe chocolate and cherry red fruit, these plants would make a stunning addition to your ornamental planting or your vegetable garden. The peppers are

perfectly crisp and deliciously sweet. The intriguing color would be beautiful used on a vegetable tray.

Tomato ‘Red Torch’ (2019 All America Selections Winner) – A flavorful, oblong tomato with beautiful, 1.5-2”, bicolor fruit. The unique, skin coloration is just the cherry on the top for this high-producer of delicious fruit. The 7-8’ indeterminate tomato also wins the prize of an AAS Winner for its resistance to high temperatures and harsh conditions. You can enjoy these tomatoes early in the season until late summer.

Zinnia ‘Profusion Red Yellow Bicolor’ (2021 All America Selections Winner) – These plants start the season with a profusion of vibrant, bicolor flowers with a red center and yellow outer petals. The bright 2” flowers impressed by fade to a mix of magenta, salmon, and soft golden petals adding variation and allure. Growing 8-14” tall and 12-18” wide, these plants make a statement at the front of a garden bed.

Begonia Megawatt™ Pink Bronze Leaf Improved (PanAmerican Seed) – Excellent performer making a bold statement in sun or shade. The large, glossy foliage is bronze-green with pink flowers in the shade and dark bronze with deep pink to almost red flowers in the sun. The plants are upright reaching from 18-24” tall and 12-18” wide.

Helianthus Suncredible™ Saturn (Proven Winners) – Helianthus Suncredible™ Yellow was one of our top picks in 2019 and 2020 and Saturn is just as outstanding. The bright yellow petals darken to bronze toward the center. The profusion of 3” flowers continue all summer on plants that reach 3’ x 3’. Saturn will make a delightful addition to any sunny garden.

Coleus ColorBlaze® El Brighto (Proven Winners) – Indeed a bright coleus when grown in the sun. El Brighto’s leaves are works of art. No two leaves are colored up exactly the same. The main body of the leaves are a wide range of shades of red. From deep red to almost pink with random splashes of green and yellow mixed in. One consistency is, each leaf’s frilly edges are trimmed in gold. Plants were vigorous reaching 30 – 36” tall. Note: plants grown in the shade were dull and not showy.

Verbena EnduraScape™ Burgundy (Ball FloraPlant) – Unlike most verbena in the trials, EnduraScape™ Burgundy did not take long breaks in flowering during hot periods nor did they require deadheading. The well branched plants were vigorous forming a dense carpet reaching 12” tall and spreading to 18” wide. Plants bounced back quickly after a rabbit found them tasty.

Top Performers:

Angelonia Sungelonia® Blue (Suntory) – This Angelonia cultivar has an upright growth habit. This season the plants consistently produced elegant, flower spikes that were more of a purple color than blue. Their purple petals are beautifully contrasted with white centers. These plants proved

heat and humidity tolerant, grew to 18" in height, and bloomed into the early fall after other Angelonias had finished for the season.

Mandevilla Sun Parasol® Giant Crimson (Suntory) – These flowers are nearly 5" wide and a deep, rich crimson produced on vigorous, disease-resistant climbers with lush, deep green foliage. Once they begin blooming in early summer, the elegant flowers will make a beautiful statement trained to a trellis or obelisk.

Pepper 'Pot-a-peño' (PanAmerican Seed) – As its name suggests, this jalapeño pepper reaching just 12-18" tall and wide is perfect when used in pots with its interesting cascading, bush shape. Each fruit is 3"-4" long, starting out deep green and turning a bright fire engine red and will add the perfect bit of spice to your recipes.

Tomato 'Loki' (PanAmerican Seed) – An indeterminate tomato reaching 6-7' if properly staked. Just as you can count on the Marvel Comics character, Loki, to cause mischief, you can also count on PanAmerican's tomato, Loki, to produce an abundance of red, medium-sized, slicing tomatoes, which are wonderful eaten raw on sandwiches and used in recipes.

Ageratum Artist® Pearl and Artist® Blue (Proven Winners) – Both Artist® Pearl and Artist® Blue were a delight in the gardens. They were covered with fuzzy button size blue or white flowers from early summer to frost. No deadheading was needed as new growth hid the old blooms. The compact mounding plants reached 8 – 10" tall and 12 – 18" wide and looked great as a border.

Heliotropium Augusta® Lavender (Proven Winners) – When we received this Heliotrope, we thought, "This will be a disappointment." Well, Augusta® Lavender proved us wrong. "Don't hate me because I'M BEAUTIFUL" is Proven Winner's tag line for it, and it is indeed beautiful. The lavender flowers were produced in abundance until frost on upright mounding plant. It did not skip a beat in our heat and humidity and worked great at the front of the border. It is always a joy to be surprised by the toughness of a plant in a genus that has not performed in the past. Augusta® Lavender takes the prize for that this year.

Basil 'Everleaf Thai Towers' (PanAmerican Seed) – This is an exceptional Thai basil that is slow to bolt and has a vibrant Thai flavor. A beautifully columnar plant with purple stems and densely packed, dark green leaves. The short internodes makes for a beautiful, tidy, towering plant that looks great in the ground as well as in container gardens that also has huge harvest potential.

Verbena Superbena® Imperial Blue (Proven Winners) – Like other Superbenas in the past, Imperial Blue is vigorous with great branching. The deep blue-purple flower clusters form large umbels and unlike most other verbenas in the trials, did not take long breaks in flowering during hot periods nor did they require deadheading. They formed a dense carpet reaching 12" tall and spreading to 18" wide and bounced back quickly after a rabbit found them tasty.

Tomato 'Buffalosun' F1 (2020 All American Selection Winner) – This high yielding tomato has the look of an heirloom, only better. Late blight resistant, it produced all summer long. The fruits were large yellow with red/orange flame coloration on the outside and a nicely marbled interior.

It was not the most flavorful but made up for it with flesh that was firm and meaty with not a lot of seed and gel and held up well when cooked. There was less cracking as compared to most tomatoes their size. It is an indeterminate and reached the top of our cages at 6' and continued to grow.

Coleus 'Copperhead' (Ball FloraPlant) – Ruffled coppery red leaves are edged in lime-yellow making the plants pop. They reached 3' tall by mid-September and went right to frost without flowering.

Consumer Favorites:

Coleus 'Spitfire' (Ball FloraPlant) – One observer described this delightful coleus as an “interesting little blob.” And it is just that with its pink, burgundy, and green foliage that droops in a mounding shape. It proved to be a low-maintenance plant, great when used in pots or edging in the garden.

Echinacea Artisan™ Collection Red Ombre, Soft Orange F1 (Kieft Seed) – These seed grown coneflowers were transplanted into the garden from a jumbo six pack in May of 2020 and took a bit of time to get started. However, once they were established, they were covered in flowers from August until frost their first year and put on another beautiful display of vibrant flowers in June and July of 2021.

Pepper 'Just Sweet' (2019 All America Selections Winner) – This pleasantly sweet pepper is a lobed, mini bell pepper of the brightest yellow produced in abundance by strong, bushy plants that do not require staking. These vigorous plants can reach up to 4' and will produce 2"-3" fruit 65-75 days from the time of transplanting. Every year since being awarded as an AAS Winner and before, this pepper has proven to be a favorite.

Shallot Onion 'Crème Brulee' (2021 All America Selections Winner) – This is the first echalion onion to win an AAS Winner designation, and rightly so, as it is a delicious citrus flavor when eaten raw and sweet without and aftertaste when caramelized. The onion is an oblong 3"-5" long and 2-2.5" wide and has beautiful, soft, pink, outer skin and light purple rings when sliced.

Tomato 'Marzito' (PanAmerican Seed) – A juicy favorite. In our beds this year, each plant produced an abundance of medium-sized cherry tomatoes with pale-yellow color and scrumptious flavor from late spring until late summer. This elongated, roma-like tomato is delicious when eaten straight from the vine or perfect used in recipes.

Vinca Soiree® Double (Suntory) – We fell in love all the Soiree Kawaii vinca in 2020 and can't say enough good things about them. They are like no other vinca we have grown and so is the Soiree® Doubles. The double blooms are so unique for a vinca. The Soiree Doubles come in White (which is really pale pink), Orchid and Pink. They looked great in containers as well as planted in the

ground in a sunny location and in well-drained soil. Like other vinca they don't flinch at our heat and humidity. For a fun combination, plant the three colors together.

Petunia Supertunia® Sharon (Proven Winners) – The medium size, pink and white-striped, double flowers, are like works of art. Unlike most double flowering petunias, we have trialed in the past, Sharon's blooms do not look like wads of wet tissue paper after a rain. They looked great spilling over the side of the pot and continued to bloom until frost without deadheading.

Coleus 'Limewire' (Ball FloraPlant) – This deep burgundy coleus has large, ruffled leaves that are edged in bright, lime green that did not fade in full sun. Vigorous plants were well branched and reached 3' tall. It did begin to flower in early September to the delight of the bees.

Marigold 'Big Duck Gold' (All American Selection) – The plants reached 2' tall and were well-branched with deep green foliage and impressive, vibrant-yellow 2-3" flowers. Plants began to lodge in September, but continue to produce large quantities of beautiful flowers.

Salvia Unplugged® Pink (Proven Winners) – Very similar to Rockin'® Fuchsia. The flower color is virtually the same color, Fuchsia. Unplugged Pink's flowers were more densely produced on plants that averaged 6" shorter than Rockin'® Fuchsia. Plants reached 2' tall and had deep green foliage. As many of the hybrid salvias do for us, it did cycle in and out of bloom but when it was in bloom it was a standout and even when not in bloom, the almost black calyx remained attractive.

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