

# Successful Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

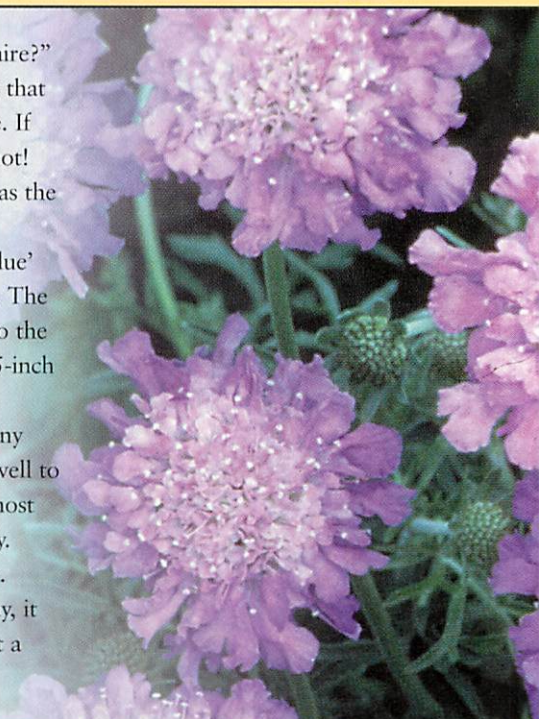
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES

Helping  
Carolínians  
Increase Their  
Knowledge of  
Gardening,  
Manage Their  
Landscape  
Investment &  
Protect the  
Environment

## 'Butterfly Blue' Named Perennial Plant of the Year

It's the last round in "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" and here's the question: Name a perennial flower that is a continuous bloomer. Your final answer, please. If you guessed *Scabiosa*, you would be taking home the jackpot! *Scabiosa columbaria* 'Butterfly Blue' is garnering attention as the 2000 Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association. Also known as pincushion flower, 'Butterfly Blue' was chosen for its reliability and long bloom in the garden. The plant's 2-inch, lavender-blue flowers add a delicate touch to the garden. It blooms from mid-spring to early fall on 12- to 15-inch sturdy stems.

Plant this fantastic flower massed in the front of a sunny border with annuals or perennials. 'Butterfly Blue' adapts well to containers and is a nice addition to the cutting garden. Almost any soil will produce fine plants provided it drains properly. Pincushion flowers are compact and require very little care. They are practically insect- and disease-resistant. By the way, it doesn't take a million dollars to make you happy, just plant a flower garden! **Toby Bost**



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## Anise Shrub Provides Spring & Summer Interest

The *Illicium parviflorum*, anise shrub, is a wonderful evergreen specimen or screen plant. The leaves and overall form are similar to rhododendron. However, unlike the sensitive rhododendron, anise shrub is tolerant of wet and dry soils with few insect and disease problems, which means it can handle clay soils or sands.

Named a Raulston Selection plant by the N.C. Association of Nurserymen, anise shrub is happiest in a partially shaded area which helps keep its olive green leaves looking

best. Small, white flowers and star-shaped fruit provide spring and summer interest. Highly aromatic, licorice-scented leaves are an added bonus. This native of the Deep South is cold hardy in the Carolinas and grows rapidly to a height and spread of 8 to 14 feet. It makes an excellent accent plant in a corner of the yard or several can be grown 10 feet apart and staggered to develop a woody-looking screen. Because of its rapid growth to a large size, it's not suitable as a foundation plant close to a house. **John MacNair**



JC Raulston ©





soraya



melody pink



cosmic orange



fiesta del sol



stardust orchid



savoy express



mr. big

## Add an All-America Winner to Your Garden

As the cold days of winter set in, seed catalogs start arriving in droves to help brighten your spirits. As you sit by the fire and thumb through page after page of wonderful flowers and vegetable varieties, make sure to take a second glance at the nine that have been selected as the All-America Selections for the year 2000.

### Flower Award Winners

The orange petals and chocolate brown center of the **'Soraya'** sunflower are sure eye-catchers. One of the distinct qualities is its orange petals as most sunflowers have golden petals. 'Soraya' plants are branching and vigorous, producing 4- to 6-inch blooms on long stems perfect for cut flowers. Flowers can produce seed for the birds if left on the plant.

The **'Melody Pink'** dianthus is another excellent choice for use as a cut flower. This AAS winner produces one-inch flowers with a serrated petal edge giving it an old-fashioned, lacy look. Sprays of single pink blooms distinguish 'Melody Pink' from other annual dianthus.

**'Cosmic Orange'** is an improved *Cosmos sulphureus* deserving a sunny site in your yard. Basically pest- and disease-free, it is adaptable and easy to grow. 'Cosmic Orange' will reach a height of 12 inches in a full sun garden.

**'Fiesta Del Sol'** is the first dwarf Mexican sunflower. *Tithonia rotundifolia* thrives on summer heat and humidity attaining a mature height of 2 to 3 feet. The single, orange daisy flowers are 2 to 3 inches across, excellent cut flowers and may attract butterflies.

The bedding plant award winner **'Stardust Orchid'** is the first released vinca with orchid and

white blooms. This favorite is relatively pest-free, heat- and drought-tolerant and is recommended for novice or experienced gardeners who want a long show of flower color with minimal garden care.

### Vegetable Award Winners

If vegetables are what you're craving, here are four you have to try.

**'Savoy Express'** is the earliest savoy (crinkled or waffle-like) cabbage with a sweet, non-bitter flavor perfect for slaw or other cabbage salads. Grow the compact plant at close spacing about a foot apart in the garden. The small heads, about 1 to 1½ pounds, are ideal for meals without too many leftovers. 'Savoy Express' cabbage is recommended for planting as a spring or fall crop.

**'Mr. Big'** is a superior English or garden pea. It produces a high yield because the plants are early, frequently setting two pods per node. The larger pods make shelling easier as well. 'Mr. Big' is an indeterminate vine, reaching 2 to 3 feet and will need vertical support.

**'Blushing Beauty'** describes the color changes of this productive sweet bell pepper. On bushy compact plants, peppers gracefully blush from ivory to pink and red as they mature. The thick-walled peppers are sweet at any color.

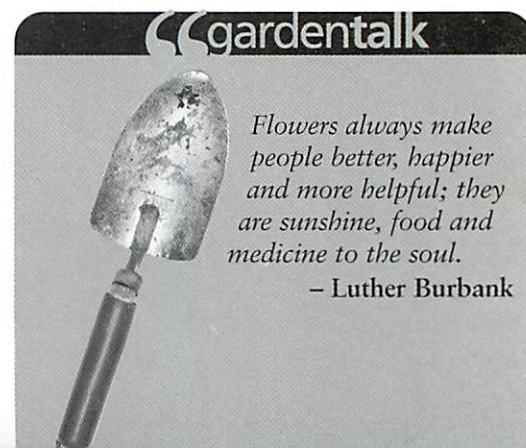
The first sweet corn with festive-colored kernels is **'Indian Summer'**, whose kernels are yellow, white, red or purple. It is a supersweet corn that requires isolation from other corn pollen. As the ears of corn mature, the color develops. 'Indian Summer' festive colors actually intensify as the ear cooks. Gourmet cooks will serve this tender, delicious sweet corn for the flavor and unique colorful presentation. **Karen Neill**



blushing beauty



indian summer



Flowers always make people better, happier and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine to the soul.

— Luther Burbank



## Q&A Why is my boxwood turning orange?

Winter injury causes orange or related colors in boxwood leaves. During the winter, wind forces moist air out of the leaves. If the plant can't replace the moisture fast enough, the green chlorophyll dies, exposing the orange color. Anything that speeds water loss or slows water replacement will contribute to leaf damage. For example, root damage slows water replacement. Phytophthora root rot, nematodes or excess fertilizer are the most common causes of root damage. Boxwoods may recover from

fertilizer injury. Root rot or nematode damaged plants should be replaced with different species. Boxwoods in planters or containers need watering during the winter so they will have water available. Frozen soil keeps roots from getting water. A layer of mulch will help reduce the amount of time the roots are frozen. Plants in exposed locations are more prone to winter injury. Moving a plant or planting something to block the wind will reduce exposure. Nothing can reverse winter injury after it has occurred. The plant will look better when new leaves appear. *David Goforth*

## ENVIRO-TIP

### Houseplants Help Improve Indoor Air Quality

Many people enjoy houseplants and raising them is quickly becoming one of the fastest-growing indoor hobbies. In addition to providing pleasant, decorative accents, houseplants improve indoor air quality by filtering many common indoor toxins and replacing oxygen. This

is especially important during the winter when most homes are closed up and air exchange is minimized.

All indoor plants help improve air quality. However, some are much more efficient at removing some common indoor air pollutants than others. Research shows that *Hedera helix*, English ivy, can remove up to 90 percent of benzene in a 24-hour period. *Spathiphyllum*, peace lily, can remove up to 50 percent of trichlorethylene and *Chlorophytum*, spider plant, can remove up to 86

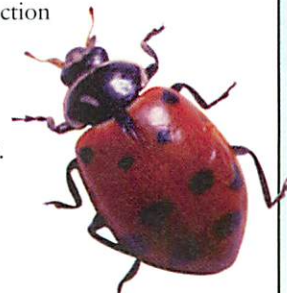
percent of formaldehyde and 96 percent of carbon monoxide in a 24-hour period under controlled conditions.

In selecting houseplants to include in your collection, especially if you have young children or pets, pay special attention to the relative toxicity of plants in relation to allergic reactions and poisonings if ingested. The following plants, in addition to the ones listed above, are considered to be among the most beneficial plants in helping reduce toxin levels and least likely to cause health problems: *Maranta leuconeura*, prayer plant; *Nephrolepis exaltate*, Boston fern; *Dracaena fragrans*, corn plant; *Plectranthus australis*, Swedish ivy; *Zygocactus truncatus*, Christmas cactus; and kalanchoe species. For more information on indoor plant selection and care, contact your local Cooperative Extension center.

*Royce Hardin*



Robert E. Lyons ©



Announcing

## Extension's Regional Gardener Seminar Series



### Topics

#### Creating a Beautiful Lawn

Learn easy lawn care and maintenance tips from the pros.

#### The Grandeur of Trees

Learn how to select and care for trees, plants that add significantly to your property's value.

#### Landscapes Alive!

Learn spring gardening and landscaping basics, from plant selections to turf care.

#### Creating Color with Annuals and Perennials

Learn how to bring your yard alive with color.

### Dates and Locations

- ▶ **Saturday, February 26**
  - Forsyth Tech, Swisher Center, Kernersville
  - Details: (336) 375-5876
- ▶ **Wednesday, March 1**
  - Southern Spring Show, Charlotte
  - Details: (704) 336-2561
- ▶ **Saturday, March 4**
  - Mountain Horticulture Crops Research & Extension Center, Fletcher
  - Details: (828) 697-4891
- ▶ **Saturday, April 8**
  - Agricultural Resources Center, Newton
  - Details: (828) 465-8240
- ▶ **Fri.-Sun. April 14-16**
  - Southern Ideal Home Show, State Fair Grounds, Raleigh
  - Details: (919) 560-8525





Garden Spot

**Wing Haven Garden and Bird Sanctuary** is situated in a beautiful old Charlotte neighborhood. The home and gardens belonged to Elizabeth and Edwin Clarkson who lived there from 1927 to 1988. With gardening as their passion, the Clarksons began the garden in 1927 as a sanctuary for birds and wildlife. Wing Haven was given to the Wing Haven Foundation in 1970 to ensure the preservation of the wilderness the Clarksons created. The almost 4-acre gardens are adorned with birdbaths and fountains that attract birds and other wildlife. This spectacular bird sanctuary combines both formal gardens with the wild woodlands in a most pleasing effect. The garden is open to the public from 3 to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 12 noon on Wednesdays and 2 to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Wing Haven is located at 248 Ridgewood Avenue in Charlotte. Call (704)334-0664.

*Karen Neill*

## Gardening in February

### Edible Plants

- Set out cabbage, potatoes, spinach, asparagus and other cool season vegetables. The time to plant is early February for the coastal areas, mid-February for the Piedmont and late February in the mountains.
- Apply dormant oil on fruit trees to kill insect eggs before leaf and flower buds expand. Applying after flower or leaf expansion will cause damage.
- Prune fruit trees as soon as the flower buds swell and show some color.

### Ornamental Plants

- Prune butterfly bush in late February.
  - Trim ornamental grasses like liriope, mondo grass and pampas grass.
  - Plant trees and shrubs now so root systems can develop before hot weather.
  - Bare root roses are showing up in the local garden centers now. Try to pick yours out early and then get them in the ground before new growth begins this spring.
    - Cut back any overgrown broadleaf shrubs now. Severe pruning should be done this month.
    - Divide perennials such as day lily, shasta daisy, gaillardia and peony when the ground is dry enough.
    - Hardwood cuttings of many landscape plants such as crepe myrtle, flowering quince, forsythia, hydrangea, juniper, spiraea and weigela can be taken this month.

### Lawns

- Fertilize cool season lawns such as fescue and bluegrass. Apply 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.
- Access turf calendars and care guidelines from N.C. Cooperative Extension at [www.ces.ncsu.edu/TurfFiles/pubs/index.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/TurfFiles/pubs/index.html) or contact your local agent. *John MacNair*



The *Successful Gardener* provides timely, research-based horticultural information. The newsletter is part of a statewide horticulture program which includes Extension's Regional Successful Gardener Seminar Series and workshops throughout the state. We publish monthly except January and July. Comments concerning *Successful Gardener* may be sent to:

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