

# Successful Gardener



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

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

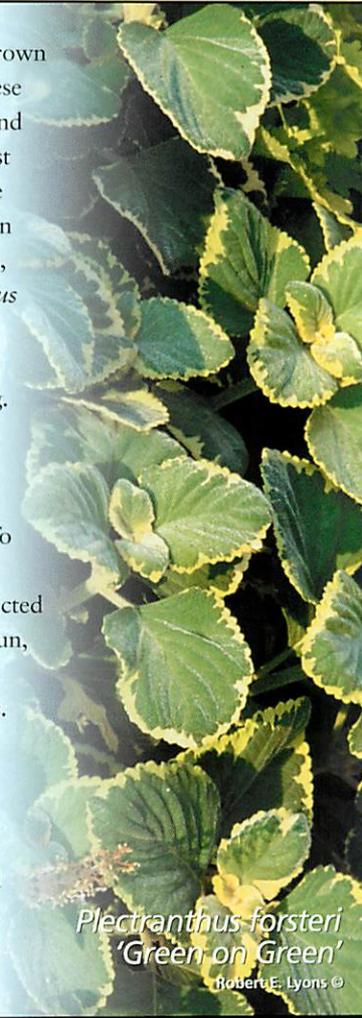
### Plectranthus Pleases Foliage Lovers

The genus *Plectranthus* is a member of the mint family and commonly grown for its interesting foliage. (The common name is also plectranthus.) These plants have large, succulent, toothed leaves on thick, branching stems and frequently reach 3 feet or more in length. Flowers may not be their strongest ornamental feature but some newer cultivars like 'Mona Lavender' can have striking floral displays. *Plectranthus* is an adaptable and variable genus grown for use as tender perennials in hanging baskets or houseplants. Some species, such as Swedish ivy, are grown specifically for container gardens. *Plectranthus* is closely related to coleus and salvias.

*Plectranthus* species are beautiful plants that are very frost sensitive and must either be brought indoors for winter or have cuttings taken for rooting. *Plectranthus* are very adaptable for garden use. They perform best in well-drained and amended soils where they can establish good root systems, especially if fertilized periodically with a complete, water-soluble product. Poorly drained soils will quickly lead to root rot and overall plant decline. To promote bushy growth, pinch the tips of the shoots occasionally during the early part of the growing season. *Plectranthus* seem to perform best in protected areas that do not receive direct sun all day. Although they can grow in full sun, their foliage color and plant habit will be at their best with some shade.

The majority of *Plectranthus* species are easy to propagate from cuttings. Take cuttings in the early fall and root small plants to overwinter indoors. Pest problems for *Plectranthus* are rarely found but can include whiteflies, aphids and red spider mites during summer months. Diseases include leaf spots, stem rots and root rots.

*Plectranthus* species are becoming more popular as landscape plants and the JC Raulston Arboretum often has some of the best of the new as well as the more familiar in their gardens. These are generally found in the Entry Bed along Beryl Road. *Diane Ashburn*



*Plectranthus forsteri* 'Green-on-Green'  
Robert E. Lyons ©

### Inside

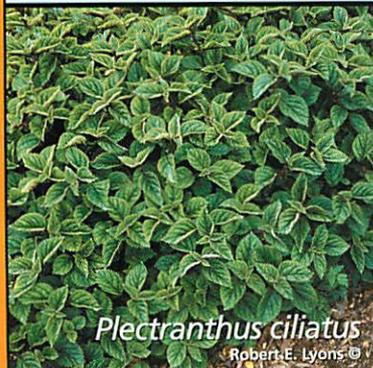
2 2005 All-America Selections

3 Enviro-Tip

4 Garden Spot

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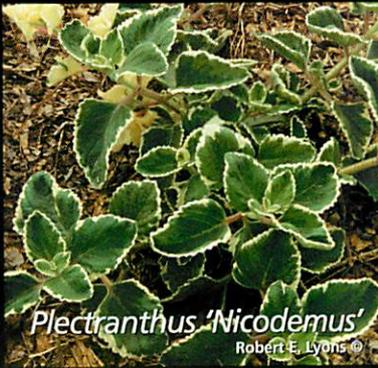
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation



*Plectranthus ciliatus*  
Robert E. Lyons ©



*Plectranthus 'Limelight'*  
Robert E. Lyons ©



*Plectranthus 'Nicodemus'*  
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All-America Selections ©

'Fairy Tale'



All-America Selections ©

'Arizona Sun'



All-America Selections ©

'Sugary'



All-America Selections ©

'Bonbon'



All-America Selections ©

'Magellan Coral'

## 2005 All-America Selections

All-America Selections (AAS) trials are conducted every year to determine which new varieties of garden plants are worthy for gardens across America. AAS includes a national network of trial gardens throughout North America. The trials accept only new, previously unsold seed varieties. Few plants become All-America Selections.

Take advantage of these meticulous seed trials and add a 2005 All-America Selections winner to your flower or vegetable garden.

### Winning Flowers

**Gaillardia aristata 'Arizona Sun'** has 3-inch single flowers that are mahogany red with bright yellow petal edges. The bright colors are similar to the desert sun in Arizona. Like many annuals, the plants produce flowers continuously. Even the spent blooms are attractive as tufts of seed. When grown in a full-sun garden, 'Arizona Sun' is a compact plant reaching only 8 to 10 inches tall, spreading about 10 to 12 inches. *Gaillardia aristata*, also known as blanket flower, is native to the Great Plains and usually considered a perennial. 'Arizona Sun' performed as an exceptional plant the first year grown from seed. This AAS winner may overwinter, depending upon the severity of winter. 'Arizona Sun' flowers can be cut and used for summer bouquets. They also may attract butterflies to the garden in search of nectar.

**Vinca 'First Kiss Blueberry'** The first blue-flowered *Catharanthus rosea* is an AAS winner named 'First Kiss Blueberry'. The large, 2-inch, single blooms have a darker eye that accentuates the violet blue color. For decades breeders have diligently worked toward a blue vinca. Now 'First Kiss Blueberry' fills the color void. Proven to be heat and drought tolerant, mature plants will be about 11 inches tall and spread 16 inches, given adequate growing conditions. 'First Kiss Blueberry' is easy to grow in patio containers or combination planters.

**Zinnia F1 'Magellan Coral'** blooms are radiant and illuminate the garden. The double 5- to 6-inch blooms gleam with luminous coral petals. The flower quality and color are superior to other *Zinnia elegans*. Consistent flower production is an improved quality. Earliness to bloom is another exceptional trait. From sowing seed to first bloom requires only 6 to 9 weeks. Mature zinnia plants will reach about 15 to 17 inches tall and spread 15 to 19 inches, depending upon growing conditions. Like all zinnias, 'Magellan Coral' will perform best in a full-sun growing location. This AAS

winner grows well in containers and needs little maintenance.

### Winning Vegetables

**Eggplant F1 'Fairy Tale'** is a petite plant with decorative miniature eggplants. The fruit appearance is as luscious as the taste. 'Fairy Tale' eggplants are white with violet or purple stripes. The fruit is sweet, non-bitter, with a tender skin and few seeds. Another superior quality is the window for harvest. The elongated oval eggplants can be picked when quite small at 1 to 2 ounces or they can be left on the plant until double the weight, while maintaining the flavor and tenderness. 'Fairy Tale' eggplants are recommended for marinating and grilling whole. The harvest can begin in just 49 to 51 days from transplanting. The petite plant reaches only 2 1/2 feet tall and wide, perfect for container gardening. An eggplant has not won an AAS award since 1939, so 'Fairy Tale' is truly an exceptional new variety.

**Tomato F1 'Sugary'** The name says it all for this tomato, which had judges raving about its flavor. The half-ounce dark pink fruit has a sugar content of 9.5%, higher than most others. The fruit is produced in clusters like grapes and can be eaten like them. 'Sugary' tomatoes have a distinct shape; they are oval with a pointed blossom end. In addition to the flavor, 'Sugary' plants produced a high yield with a noticeable lack of cracked fruit.

Look for ripe fruit on the strong semi-indeterminate vines within 60 days from transplanting into warm, prepared garden soil or large containers. Plants are vigorous and may need pruning to contain growth.

**Winter Squash F1 'Bonbon'** is a *Cucurbita maxima* with three improved traits: restricted habit, earliness and superior eating qualities. 'Bonbon' has an upright, semi-bush habit needing less garden space. Mature vines spread about 8 feet. When 'Bonbon' plants are transplanted into a full-sun garden, look for ripe fruit within 81 days, a full week earlier than other varieties. 'Bonbon' squash has thick orange flesh and, when cooked, delivers sweet flavor (hence the name 'Bonbon') and creamy texture loaded with vitamin A. The boxy shaped dark green squash is painted with silver stripes and weighs about 4 pounds. Easy to grow, 'Bonbon' is not highly susceptible to diseases and is adaptable to any location where squash is grown.

Learn more at [www.all-americaelections.org/](http://www.all-americaelections.org/).  
**Darrell Blackwelder**



## What's the best way to control scale on shrubs?

If your landscape includes camellias, hollies or euonymus, chances are scale insects will be a problem from time to time. The adults often attach to leaves and branches where they suck plant sap and reproduce, meaning many small, immature insects will join them on the leaves' undersides. Their cover is also a good shield against predators and insecticides. Scales are not highly visible because they prefer the shade such as the inside of a plant's canopy and the underside of leaves. On hollies, for example, one may overlook these insects but see evidence like a black coating on the leaves. This is called sooty mold which can grow

on the honeydew that some scales secrete.

Horticultural oil is recommended throughout the year except when the foliage is new and tender. When plants are under drought stress, it's best to avoid oils. The best way to tackle the problem is to apply the oil multiple times to smother or suffocate the pests. It is best to wait 10 to 14 days between applications in cool weather and 7 to 10 days when it is warm. Pruning out heavily infested branches before treatments will reduce the obvious population and allow for better contact. The best control will be obtained with a good coating of oil over the scale infested portion of the plant. **Donald Breedlove**

## ENVIRO-TIP

### Right Plant, Right Place

One of the major reasons attributed to plant loss is using a plant in a setting for which it is unsuited. Most plants come with a culture tag containing important information about the plant such as height, width, light and water requirements and other pertinent information. Before buying, decide if the plant suits your needs.

When plant material is planted in the wrong location, it will never perform to its full capacity and will always be more prone to diseases and insects. A shrub that has to be pruned often because it gets too tall for its location will never have the desired shape for which it was grown. Shade-loving plants will not flourish in sun conditions and selections that require good drainage will prove to be a constant disappointment in a location that has poor drainage.

Disregard a plant's requirements and you'll likely spend needless money on replacement plants. Even if plants do survive in an inappropriate location, they will be shorter lived. Also note planting zone information

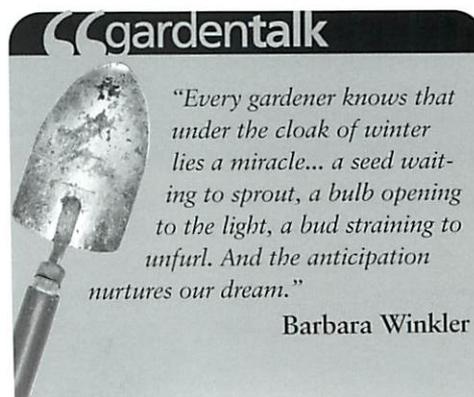
when purchasing plant material.

Successful gardeners take into consideration the things that will make a difference to the health and well-being of the plant. Most established plants require little maintenance and prove to be a pleasure to the gardener, but a plant that is planted in the wrong place will rarely give satisfaction for long. Become aware of sun and shade requirements as well as zone recommendations and water and drainage guidelines. Look at your location and then compare that with the height and width of the mature plant. Save yourself some aggravation by becoming an informed gardener. **Donna Teasley**



Robert E. Lyons ©

Atlantic White Cedar

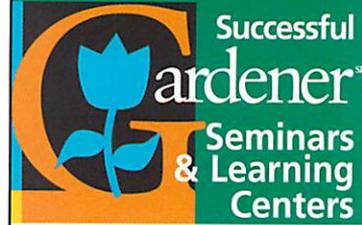


### gardentalk

*"Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle... a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream."*

Barbara Winkler

## Extension's



► **Jan. 8 & 9**, Greater Charlotte Home and Landscape Show, Cabarrus Arena and Events Center, (704) 920-3310.

► **Feb. 10**, 6-8 p.m., Cooperative Extension Center, Burke County, 130 Ammons Drive, Ste. 2, Morganton, (828) 439-4460.

► **Feb. 15**, 6-8 p.m., Burke County (see above for location details).

► **Feb. 19**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Charlie Rose Agricultural Center, 301 East Mountain Drive, Fayetteville, (910) 321-6405.

► **Feb. 22**, 7 p.m., Nash County Agriculture Center, (252) 459-9810.

► **Feb. 25-27**, 2005 Home and Garden Show, Raleigh Convention Center, (919) 831-6061.

► **Feb. 26**, 12:30 p.m., Triad Home and Garden Show, Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, (336) 767-8213.

► **March 2-6**, Successful Gardener Learning Center, Southern Spring Home & Garden Show, Charlotte Merchandise Mart, (704) 922-0301.

► **March 4**, Presentations throughout day by Extension horticulture agents, Southern Spring Home & Garden Show, Charlotte Merchandise Mart, (704) 922-0301.

► **March 10**, 6-9 p.m., Cooperative Extension Center, Burke County, 130 Ammons Drive, Ste. 2, Morganton, (828) 439-4460.

► **March 11-13**, Successful Gardener Learning Center, Southern Ideal Home Show, Greensboro Coliseum, (336) 375-5876.

► **March 12**, Presentations throughout day by Extension horticulture agents and Jim Wilson, formerly of The Victory Garden, co-sponsored by Carolina Gardener Magazine, Southern Ideal Home Show, Greensboro Coliseum, (336) 375-5876.

More details and speaker information at [www.successfulgardener.org](http://www.successfulgardener.org).



Garden Spot

Spring-like days in the middle of the winter are all it takes to get one excited about the upcoming summer garden. A great way to get a head start is to start vegetables from seed.

There are many reasons to start your vegetables from seed. For one, it is less expensive. Seed cost less than buying transplants in the stores. Another reason is that you can choose from a much greater selection of cultivars. Your local garden centers carry only a small selection of cultivars. By starting your own from seed, you can look through all the seed catalogs and choose the cultivars you want to grow in your garden.

Of course, there is a trade-off when it comes to starting your own vegetables. You need to have the space and the time. Depending on the vegetables you choose to grow, they will need anywhere from 2 to 8 weeks until they are ready to transplant.

Read more about starting vegetables from seed at [www.successfulgardener.org](http://www.successfulgardener.org).

*Ben Dungan*

## Gardening in January & February

### Lawns

- Fertilize cool-season lawns in February with 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of turf if a soil sample has not been taken. To determine how many pounds of fertilizer material is needed from a bag to achieve the 1 pound of actual nitrogen, divide the first number on the bag by 100.
- Begin preemergence weed management in late February to prevent summer annual weeds. Read and follow all label directions.
- Control winter weeds with a broadleaf herbicide on a warm, calm day with temperatures above 55 degrees F.

### Ornamentals

- If needed, mulch around plants with quality bark material or pine needle material to control annual weed germination, add organic amendments to the soil and keep the soil temperature and moisture more consistent.
  - In late February, prune plants that bloom on new season's growth; prune evergreen shrubs if they are overgrown.
  - Prune ornamental grasses, such as mondo grass, liriopie and larger ornamental grasses, to the new growing points.
    - Late February is a good time to begin separating perennials such as hosta and daylily.

### Edibles

- Order vegetable and other garden seed for late winter and early spring planting.
- Inspect and apply dormant oil sprays on fruit trees to kill insects harboring on the plants. Finish spraying before leaf and flower buds break dormancy and expand.
- Contact your county Cooperative Extension Center for vegetable planting dates for your area. Plant cool-season vegetables during this time. *Stephen Greer*

### TOP AWARDS RECEIVED FROM:

- ▶ North Carolina State Grange/Extension Foundation
- ▶ Garden Writers Association
- ▶ International Association of Business Communicators
- ▶ N.C. & National Associations of County Agricultural Agents
- ▶ Southern Extension Forest Resource Specialists
- ▶ Mecklenburg County Priority Awards

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For a list of garden centers where you can find *Successful Gardener*<sup>SM</sup>, please call (919)513-3112 or visit Cooperative Extension on the web at <http://www.successfulgardener.org>

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