

# Successful Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



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

## JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

### *Illicium* Belongs in Southern Gardens

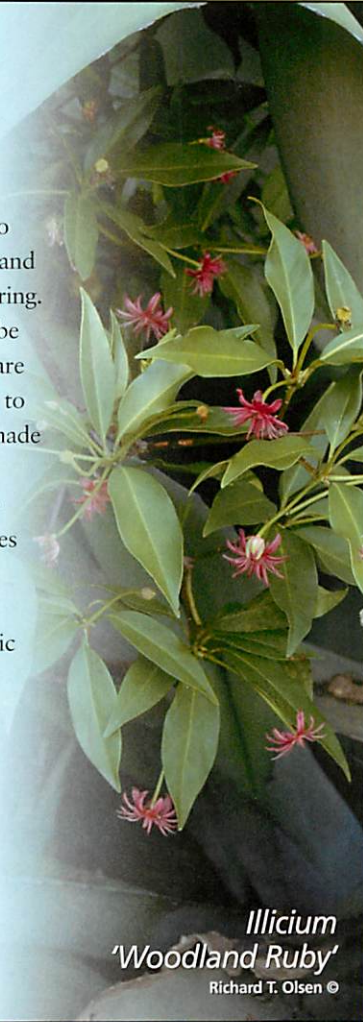
**A** rapid growing, low maintenance shrub with spectacular foliage is a combination that's hard to beat. Gardeners will find these winning characteristics in *Illicium floridanum*, a plant to be considered for any Southern garden.

The plant has a multi-stemmed, upright, compact habit. The foliage of Florida anise or anise-tree is quite attractive and aromatic, smelling similar to anise spice when crushed. The shiny leathery leaves are olive green in color and the 1 1/2-inch flowers are dark red with many petals appearing in the early spring.

*Illicium* species usually reach a height between 10 to 15 feet and should be spaced in the landscape at least 5 feet apart. Florida anise's natural habitats are the wet, swampy areas or wooded streams with acidic rich soil from Florida to Louisiana, but it will thrive here in the Carolinas. *Illicium* grows in partial shade to full shade, but reportedly can be acclimated to full sun if well watered. It prefers moist soil and definitely should be mulched and watered during prolonged dry spells, as it has a tendency to wilt. The recommended USDA zones range from 7 to 10. The foliage and fruit of the anise-tree are poisonous to cattle. Several cultivars are available including 'Alba' with white flowers and 'Shady Lady' which is variegated. *Illicium* 'Woodland Ruby' is an interspecific hybrid between *I. floridanum* 'Alba' and *I. mexicanum*, and produces showy blooms in spring and fall. Also consider the rare, yellow-flowered species, *Illicium simonsii*. There is another member of the genus that is native to the southeastern part of the country called yellow anise or *Illicium parvifolium*, which is a popular landscaping shrub, especially for use as hedges, and it is more tolerant of sun and dry soil than other species.

Look for *Illicium* in the JC Raulston Arboretum, which has 19 different accessions in its collection, including seven cultivars of *Illicium floridanum*.

*Diane Ashburn*



*Illicium*  
*'Woodland Ruby'*  
Richard T. Olsen ©

## Inside

**2** New Plants to Try in Your Garden

**3** Enviro-Tip

**4** Garden Spot

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*Illicium simonsii*  
Tom Ranney ©



*I. floridanum 'Coosa'*  
Tom Ranney ©



*Illicium 'Woodland Ruby'*  
Tom Ranney ©





'Evolution' Salvia



'Zowie! Yellow Flame' Zinnia



'Purple Haze' Carrot



'Mariachi' Pepper

## New Plants to Try in Your Garden

Looking for something new to try this year? Seven ornamentals and four vegetables were named All-America Selections (AAS) winners for 2006. Since 1932, AAS, an association of professionals in the horticulture industry, has tested new flowers and vegetables at official sites.

Winners from AAS will likely be available from local nurseries or you can find plants by visiting the AAS Web site, [www.all-americaselections.org](http://www.all-americaselections.org).

### 2006 Flower Winners

**Dianthus F1 'Supra Purple'** bloomed early and exhibited exceptional heat tolerance and prolific bloom. The 1 1/2-inch single purple flowers are lacy, with highly fringed petal edges. In full sun, 'Supra Purple' will reach 12 inches tall with an upright bouquet habit, spreading 10 inches. 'Supra Purple' flowers can be cut for fresh arrangements or enjoyed in the garden during the long flowering period. From date of sowing seed, it will bloom in about 10 to 12 weeks.

**Diascia F1 'Diamonte Coral Rose'** is a good alternative for those looking for a cool-season bedding plant other than pansies. 'Diamonte Coral Rose' is an exceptional diascia. It blooms earlier than other diascias, has a wonderful branching habit that encourages more blooms, stays in bloom longer and is frost tolerant. The coral blossoms are produced on spikes, covering the full plant. Its height is about 8 to 10 inches and will spread 18 inches. It can make an attractive edger or can be used in containers to cascade down the sides.

**Nicotiana F1 'Perfume Deep Purple'** delivers both color and scent. The deep purple, star-shaped flowers give off a hint of sweetness in the evening. Expect the plant to grow to 20 inches in height and spread 15 to 18 inches, if planted in full sun. 'Perfume Deep Purple' performs well even in partial shade and is a good choice for container gardens.

**Ornamental Pepper 'Black Pearl'** is a pepper that is extremely attractive in the garden, but too hot for most people's taste. Peppers are heat and sun lovers, so they can provide some color in the garden when other flowers are struggling. 'Black Pearl' has deep purple, almost black leaves and fruits. The leaves will start out green when grown indoors, but once they hit the sun the color quickly deepens. The small black fruits, resembling black pearls, give the plant its name. 'Black Pearl' makes an excellent focal point in a container garden, growing to a height of about 18 inches and about 12 to 16 inches wide. It's a vigorous grower with few pest problems.

**Salvia farinacea 'Evolution'** offers the same great qualities associated with other *Salvia farinacea*, in a rich violet version. It tested well in drought-tolerant areas, showing minimal pest problems. 'Evolution' will grow 2 feet tall, spread 16 to 19 inches and will have flower spikes 6 to 7 inches long. It even keeps blooming when not deadheaded, making it great for a low maintenance annual.

**Viola F1 'Skippy XL Red-Gold'** is another cool-season bedding plant award winner. This is the first *Viola cornuta* to win the prestigious AAS Award. The improved qualities are flower size, flower colors and freedom of bloom. The large, 1 1/2-inch, round flower appears to be a pansy, but it's a viola. The colors are ruby red, with violet red shading below the golden yellow face containing penciling or whiskers. When mature, the plants will spread 8 inches and remain dwarf, about 6 inches tall.

**Zinnia F1 'Zowie! Yellow Flame'** is an eye-catching, semi-tall annual with a bicolor pattern. It grows 24 to 29 inches tall, spreading 26 to 27 inches. The bloom has a scarlet-rose center with yellow petal edges and is often described as looking like a "yellow flame." Easy to grow, they prefer full sun and well-drained soil. Plant them after the soil warms in late spring or early summer. Deadhead for longer-lasting color in the garden.

### 2006 Vegetable Winners

**Carrot F1 'Purple Haze'**, *Daucus carota*, is a unique carrot with purple skin and orange inside. Serve raw as a novelty for kids and gourmet meals. The sweet 10- to 12-inch carrots lose their purple color when cooked. They pack a load of vitamins and antioxidants. Harvest in 70 days.

**Cilantro 'Delfino'**, *Coriandrum sativum*, is an improved aromatic edible herb with fine fernlike 20-inch foliage that looks great in mixed containers as well as in the vegetable garden. It's easy to grow and leaves can be harvested in 4 to 5 weeks after planting. The seed is the spice coriander.

**Pepper F1 'Carmen'**, *Capsicum annuum*, is a beautiful, improved Italian-type, horn-shaped pepper. It is unusually sweet when ripe, raw or cooked. At 28 inches tall, it is perfect for a patio container. Harvest 75 days from transplant.

**Pepper F1 'Mariachi'**, *Capsicum annuum*, is vigorous, attractive, 18- to 24-inch plant filled continuously with flowers and fruit. The large 4x2-inch, cone-shaped, mildly hot peppers are delicious when pale yellow, orange or bright red. Harvest 66 days from transplant.

David Barkley

## gardentalk

"The gardening season officially begins on January 1 and ends on December 31."

Marie Huston







## What do I need to consider when hiring a landscaper?

To make sure you hire the right landscaper for the job, plan to do some research, such as:

Ask your friends and neighbors or your local nursery or garden center for a recommendation. Word of mouth is usually dependable. Ask for references and look for experience. Reputable landscapers will be dependable and willing to have you visit sites of previous landscape jobs.

Visit sites and judge the quality of the job yourself. If possible, ask the homeowners what they think of the landscaper and if the landscaper completed their job on time.

Check to see if the landscaper has the proper equipment to do the job. This can be very important when you are trying to

preserve part of an existing landscape.

Check for proper licenses. Do landscapers have a current pesticide license? Are they fully licensed and insured? Do they have any professional certifications? Ask for verification of these licenses and certifications. Do not sign anything until you see these licenses and make sure they are current.

Ask for a written cost estimate. Make sure it specifies exactly what is to be included in the price. A contract is advisable. Include what work is to be performed, a completion date and penalties for work not completed according to schedule.

Don't pay until the job is complete. With large jobs, you may be asked to make a partial payment but it should never be more than 20% of the total job cost. *Emily Revels*

## 2006 Roses

What makes a rose a winner? A two-year field test evaluates and assigns a rating for 15 characteristics. College horticulture professors and supervisors of large public gardens rate qualities like disease resistance, color, fragrance, vigor, bud and flower form. The test sites represent a wide range of climates and growing conditions that are normally provided by an average home gardener.

### 2006 Winners

**Julia Child** is a butter-gold floribunda with a strong sweet licorice and spice fragrance. It has a rounded habit, bright super-glossy foliage and excellent disease resistance.

**Rainbow Sorbet** is a light yellow and pink multicolored floribunda with upright growth habit. There is no noticeable flower fragrance and the foliage is glossy dark green with above average black spot resistance.

**Tahitian Sunset** hybrid tea has a peachy apricot pink color and a strong yellow base. It has a high-centered growth habit that is well branched and has a strong anise fragrance. The rating for disease resistance is good.

**Wild Blue Yonder** is deep reddish-purple with a lavender "eyezone." This grandiflora class rose has an upright and bushy habit with rich glossy green leaves. It has excellent disease resistance and fragrance of citrus blossom and rose.

*Don Breedlove*

## ENVIRO-TIP

### Solar-Heated Greenhouses

A solar greenhouse is more cost effective than a traditional greenhouse when growing flower and vegetable seedlings. A solar greenhouse stores excess heat during the day. This keeps the greenhouse warmer at night. Typically, water-filled containers passively store this heat inside the greenhouse. At least one gallon of water is needed for every square foot of glazing. More water is better.

Orient greenhouses east and west for maximum solar gain. Insulate the north wall to reduce the amount of heat loss at night. Controlling air infiltration is critical. Larger containers such as 55-gallon drums provide lots of heat storage, but smaller containers like 2-liter drink bottles provide faster heat exchange. A combination works best. Avoid using milk jugs because they become brittle. For maximum solar gain in late February and March, slant the south-facing roof at a 45-degree angle. (Outside of North Carolina the roof angle should be the latitude plus 10 degrees.)

Start seeds in a warmer location and move to the greenhouse about 6 weeks prior to the date you want them in the garden. Ventilation will be required during mid-day. Plan to open the greenhouse later and close it earlier in the day than you would a greenhouse with supplemental heating. During cold snaps, plan to cover the seedlings with newspaper during the night to maintain warmth. A non-woven landscape fabric provides additional protection for colder nights. Remove the cover when temperatures get above freezing. This type of set-up will work down to 18 degrees F. For lower forecasts, when the lives of hundreds of seedlings hang in the balance, spend a few cents on supplemental heating. Seedlings will grow more slowly in this environment, but won't require hardening off. Seedlings produced in solar greenhouses often perform better during transplanting than seedlings produced in traditional greenhouses. *David Goforth*



J.C. Paulston ©





Garden Spot

A great way to beat the doldrums of winter is to spend a day at a **Home and Garden Show** in the Carolinas. Some of the shows are fundraisers for worthwhile community organizations and many are educational in nature. The shows provide a chance to learn from local experts and they are a cost-effective venue for family entertainment. Depending on the show, you may be able to view spectacular garden displays, visit *Extension's Successful Gardener* Learning Center or attend a helpful *Successful Gardener* seminar, purchase gardening supplies or plants, and possibly win a valuable door prize from a show sponsor.

#### Upcoming shows:

**Feb. 24-26** – Triad Home and Garden Show, Winston-Salem

**March 1-5** – Southern Spring Home & Garden Show, Charlotte

**March 24-26** – Southern Ideal Home Show, Greensboro

**March 25 & 26** – Orchid Show & Sneak Peek at Spring, NC Arboretum, Asheville

*Toby Bost*

## Gardening in January & February

### Lawns

- Evaluate lawn areas for health, thickness, compaction and weeds; learn from the pros at [www.turffiles.ncsu.edu](http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu).
- Fertilize cool-season grasses, such as fescue and bluegrass, in February with 1 pound of nitrogen for every 1,000 square feet of lawn. To determine pounds of fertilizer to apply, divide 100 by the first number of the fertilizer ratio. For example, if the bag is 5-10-10 fertilizer:  $100/5=20$ , so 20 pounds of fertilizer per 1,000 square feet of lawn is the appropriate amount to apply.
- Apply an appropriate broadleaf herbicide to weedy areas on a warm day according to the label (action is slower in winter).

### Ornamentals

- Remember your interior plants and forced bulbs. Keep them near a bright window and away from drafts. Maintain moisture, prune if necessary and fertilize only when actively growing.
  - Renew multi-stemmed shrubs such as abelia, spirea and weigela by removing one-third of the branches at ground level every winter until desired size and flowering are achieved.
    - Prune summer- and fall-blooming plants now; wait to prune spring-blooming perennials after flowers fade to retain flower buds.
    - Prune roses in mid-February to March; clean up leaves and clippings to prevent disease problems.

### Edibles

- Plant cool-season vegetables; dates and cultivars for your region can be found in Home Vegetable Gardening ([www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/ag-06.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/ag-06.html)).
- Prune fruit trees while dormant, according to Training and Pruning Fruit Trees ([www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/ag29.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/ag29.html)). Check for pests.

*Mark Blevins*

### 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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