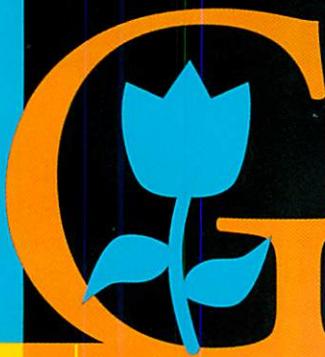


Successful Gardener

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

Blueberries in the Landscape

Blueberries, *Vaccinium* sp., are one of the few plants that offer both beauty and taste throughout most of the year. The actual blueberry fruit is touted by the National Institutes of Health as a way to delay the aging process. Blueberries are nutritional stars, providing a powerhouse boost of antioxidants and nutrients without adding many calories. So why not plant them in your home landscape?

Blueberries are typically used in the landscape as hedges for screening purposes, but they can also be used in cluster plantings or as single specimen plants. Blueberries are spectacular in the fall with brilliant yellow and red foliage that lights up the landscape. They have attractive, bell-shaped, white and occasionally pink flowers in the spring. The summer fruit is a dark purplish blue. An added bonus is their lack of disease and insect problems.

Blueberries require a lower pH than many other small fruit crops and other plants. Therefore, consider grouping them with other acid-loving plants such as hollies, azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias. Before planting, take a soil test. The ideal pH for blueberries is between 4.0 and 5.0 or 5.5, depending on the cultivar.

Both the highbush and rabbiteye types grow well in North Carolina. Highbush typically have larger fruit and better fruit quality than rabbiteyes, but are not as widely adapted to various soil types. The cultivar 'Premier' is an excellent choice for a rabbiteye and has the added advantage of being self-fruitful, unlike most blueberries that require cross-pollination for fruit set.

Dr. Jim Ballington, NC State University horticulture professor, has developed a series of Southern highbush blueberries that retain the high fruit quality of standard highbush but demonstrate greater adaptation to a wider range of soil types. Cultivars 'O'Neal', 'Sampson' and 'Legacy' are good choices. Little annual attention is required, except for occasional pruning.

Learn more about varieties to consider for the coastal plain, piedmont and mountains, organic additives, planting and fertilizer requirements and sources of plants at www.successfulgardener.org. **Terry Garwood**



Bill Cline ©

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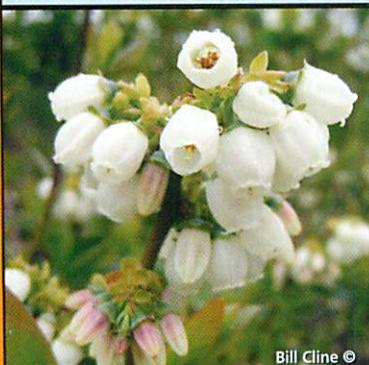


4 Garden Spot



This issue sponsored by

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All-America Selections ©

'Fresh Look Gold' Celosia



All-America Selections ©

'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' Vinca



All-America Selections ©

'Opera Supreme Pink Morn' Petunia



All-America Selections ©

'Holy Molé' Pepper

'Holy Molé', Look at These Winners

Leave it to the All-America Selections (AAS) to provide ideas for new plants to try in your garden each year. Four garden plants earned the designation as one of the 2007 All-America Selections (AAS). These beauties were selected from many new cultivars, based on performance in the garden and in the greenhouse. Although no plant offers a guarantee of success in an individual garden, the AAS winners have proven themselves worthy over a broad range of growing conditions. Try these new selections alongside your old standbys so you'll have a means of comparison. AAS winners should be available through local garden centers and mail-order catalogs soon. For more information about these and previous years' winners, visit the AAS Web site at www.all-americaelections.org.

2007 Flower Winners

'Fresh Look Gold' is a celosia named for the lasting fresh look of the compact, 4-inch golden plumes on 12-inch-tall plants. 'Fresh Look Gold' has excellent heat tolerance and requires minimal maintenance to look its best all season.

'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' is the first bicolor vinca to combine a burgundy halo surrounding a large white center. 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo' also flowers early and promises good heat and drought tolerance. This sun-loving annual bedding plant has a nice, compact habit without the need for pinching. It reaches about 12 inches tall and wide when mature.

'Opera Supreme Pink Morn' petunia boasts iridescent pink blossoms with a slight eye of creamy white and a yellow throat. It flowers freely all summer until frost on dwarf 4- to 6-inch plants that spread up to 3 feet.

2007 Vegetable Winner

'Holy Molé' is a hybrid selection of the pungent pepper used to make molé sauce. 'Holy Molé' is earlier, more vigorous, virus-resistant and higher yielding than more traditional pasilla-type peppers. Harvest the 7- to 9-inch-long skinny peppers as immature green about 85 days from transplanting. The more traditional harvest is the dark, chocolate-brown mature peppers with a tangy, nutty flavor. The mature plants reach 2- to 3-feet tall and are best grown in full sun. *Diane Turner*

The Classics

In 2007, AAS celebrates 75 years of selecting winners. To commemorate the mission of introducing superior new varieties, AAS announces five winners that have stood the test of time. The 75th Anniversary Classics are:

- Tomato F1 'Big Beef', introduced in 1994
- Dianthus F1 'Ideal Violet', introduced in 1992
- Petunia F1 'Ultra Crimson Star', introduced in 1988
- Petunia F1 'Wave® Purple', introduced in 1992
- Pansy F1 'Majestic Giants Mix', introduced in 1966

'Wave® Purple' Petunia

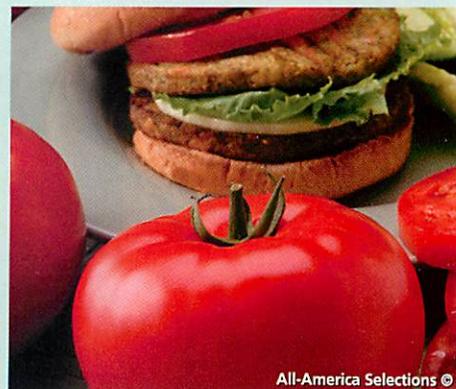


All-America Selections ©



All-America Selections ©

'Majestic Giants Mix' Pansy



All-America Selections ©

'Big Beef' Tomato

gardentalk

"There's one good thing about snow, it makes your lawn look as nice as your neighbors'."

Clyde Moore



Q&A

When is the best time to prune fruit trees and vines?

Pruning may be done at any time to remove dead, damaged, diseased or dying limbs and branches. Major pruning should occur at dormancy, after the leaves have shed but before new growth begins for the spring.

Vine fruit crops like raspberries and blackberries will develop cankers and galls on canes. Remove the dead canes close to the ground after the berries are harvested to encourage the new season's emerging canes to grow strong. If they develop before or about harvest time, remove them several inches below these areas. Fire blight is common on pear and apple trees; prune shortly

after blooming, a foot below the lowest infested foliage. If months have passed and the disease entered the wood, prune out the infested wood when the foliage is dry.

Tree fruits, in addition to vine fruits, require annual dormant season pruning to open their canopy for better light penetration and air movement during spring. This management practice encourages better color and size and reduces some disease development. Older apple tree pruning should start in January followed by young apple trees in late January. Prune all other fruit in February or later. Prune before buds swell to the point of being broken.

Don Breedlove

ENVIRO-TIP

Plants for Slopes

When establishing plants on a slope, there are many factors to consider. How steep is the slope and would a retaining wall be a better solution? Does the water move quickly across the slope causing erosion concerns? Does any of the water make it into the rootzone of the plantings? What are some of the other climatic factors – rain, irrigation, sun, shade – that you need to deal with in making your plant selections?

When plants are used on slopes, their roots help anchor the soil when the plant becomes established. Getting them established on a slope, however, can be difficult. Seeds and mulch may wash away. Wildflowers, clump-forming ornamental grasses or other perennial native plants usually adapt quickly to slopes and unimproved soil.

South-facing slopes tend to dry out quickly. Choose a variety of drought-tolerant plants. Try a mixture of spreading shrubs, ornamental grasses, perennials and herbaceous groundcovers for effective slope stabilization. The tried, true and tested selections of groundcovers often center on using

liriope, mondo grass and English ivy. There are, however, other options. The Brunswick County Botanical Gardens, a project of N.C. Cooperative Extension, tests a number of plants on slopes and has had success with a variety of ornamental grasses including muhlygrass, *Muhlenbergia capillaris*; pampas grass, *Cortaderia selloana*; blue fescue, *Festuca glauca*; fountain grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln'; and feather reed grass, *Calamagrostis brachytricha*.

For perennials, try gaillardia, coneflower, daylilies, evening primrose, globe thistle, yucca, wild indigo, coreopsis, yarrow, black-eyed Susan and sedum.

Consider hollies, Indian hawthorns and junipers. Annuals such as the ornamental sweet potato and the Wave petunia will provide a lot of coverage, but they do not provide long-term erosion control. An interesting combination is a red 'Knock Out' rose with the ornamental sweet potato vine running underneath. The Scotch Petite Rose cascading down a slope is another attractive choice.

David Barkley

New Rose Choices

After two years of testing in 23 gardens around the country, the 2007 All-American Rose Selections (AARS) announce three roses that made the cut. The rigorous trial included many different growing climates and conditions with emphasis on 15 different criteria, including disease resistance and ease of maintenance.



'Rainbow Knock Out' is a landscape shrub rose. Not only completely resistant to black spot, powdery mildew and rust, this compact plant blooms late into the season with a single, 5-petal coral bloom that is suitable for container gardening.

'Moondance' is an upright floribunda with large masses of creamy white flowers and dark green, glossy foliage. With 18-inch stems and a spicy fragrance, this plant is well suited for cutting.

An ancestor of the 1950 AARS winner, 'Sutter's Gold', the third selection is 'Strike It Rich', a stunning grandiflora with dark golden flowers swirled with ruby red. With its disease-resistant characteristics and long-lasting flowers, this plant is sure to be a must for rose gardeners everywhere.

Donna Teasley



Robert E. Lyons ©



Extension's *Successful Gardener*[®] program provides timely, research-based horticultural information. The newsletter is part of the statewide horticulture program which includes Extension's *Successful Gardener*[®] Regional Seminar Series and county workshops. We publish 10 issues per year. Comments concerning *Successful Gardener*[®] may be sent to:

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Gardening in January & February

Lawns

- Fertilize cool-season grasses like tall fescue toward the end of February.
- Preemergent crabgrass preventer can go on cool-season lawns toward the end of February.
- During El Nino years the weather sometimes warms up in January or February. If the winter annual weeds in the lawn are actively growing, you can treat them with a postemergent broadleaf weed herbicide.

Ornamentals

- During a mild winter, bulbs start popping up during January. While a few of the older cultivars can be damaged, most won't have any problems. Bulbs should be able to survive 20 degrees F weather.

- Finish cleaning up any seed heads left for birds in the perennial garden. Cut back old foliage on grasses and most perennials. The exceptions are lantana, verbena and salvia. Wait until March to cut them back.

- Severely cut back buddleia in February. This plant blooms on the new growth.
 - Bring spring indoors early by forcing branches of forsythia, quince, spirea and winter honeysuckle. Place stems in a vase of water and watch them open well before those in the landscape.
 - There is still time to test your soil; add lime to any soil that needs it.

Edibles

- Start cool-season vegetable seeds such as cabbage, broccoli and lettuce in January. February is a good time to start tomato, pepper and eggplant seeds indoors. Wait until 3 or 4 weeks before the 90 percent frost-free date to start cucumbers, melons and squash.
- Start dormant pruning on apples, pears and grapes.

David Goforth

The Southern Spring Home & Garden Show,

one of the Southeast's largest gardening expositions, runs from February 28 through March 4, 2007, in Charlotte. Visit dream gardens, orchid displays presented by the North Carolina Piedmont Orchid Society, bonsai displays and ikebana creations, the Japanese art of flower arranging. Stop by *Extension's Successful Gardener* Learning Center to get your gardening questions answered by Extension horticulture agents and Master Gardeners from the region. Nearby is the Plant Discovery Stage for hands-on learning about your favorite plants. On Friday, March 2, visit the Great Garden Stage and the many features of *Extension's Successful Gardener* and Master Gardener Day, which includes a container planting contest and seminars presented by Cooperative Extension horticultural experts Linda Blue and Jim Monroe, and Bryce Lane of "In the Garden with Bryce Lane" TV show. For hours and ticket information call (800) 849-0248 or visit www.southernshows.com.

Stephen Greer

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- ▶ Garden Writers Association
- ▶ International Association of Business Communicators
- ▶ N.C. & National Associations of County Agricultural Agents
- ▶ Southern Extension Forest Resource Specialists
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