

north carolina's
2010

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SHOWSTOPPER plants



Photo credit: Dr. Dennis Werner



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SHRUB: *'WINTER SUN' MAHONIA* (*Mahonia x media 'Winter Sun'*)

'WINTER SUN' MAHONIA IS A STATUESQUE, EVERGREEN shrub that makes an interesting focal point for the winter garden. In December **'Winter Sun'** lights up any garden with its bright yellow flower spikes perched above its course-textured, almost holly-looking, foliage.

Chosen as an improved selection in Ireland in 1966, this Mahonia hybrid is a relative newcomer to the Carolinas. This hybrid has a more compact habit with more fragrant flowers than the common Leatherleaf Mahonia.

Even with its compact growth habit, **'Winter Sun'** will still reach a height of 10 feet if left unpruned. Set out this Mahonia in a partially shaded location. Additional water is essential during prolonged summer droughts.

As an added benefit, the plant produces grape-like clusters of black berries in late spring that the songbirds love to eat.

Hardiness Zones: 7 to 9

SHRUB: *'CROWN JEWEL' GARDENIA* (*Gardenia augusta 'Crown Jewel' PP #19896*)

IN THE PLANT WORLD IF YOU SEE A **'CROWN JEWEL' GARDENIA**, you will think you have died and gone to heaven. This new dwarf Gardenia is compact, cold hardy and gorgeous.

This Gardenia is the product of a formal plant breeding project out of Siler City, N.C. **'Crown Jewel'** combines the best traits from its parents, **'Kleim's Hardy'** and **'Chuck Hayes'**. The new hybrid has the **'Kleim's Hardy'** dwarf size and prolific flowering and the cold hardiness and double-bloom of **'Chuck Hayes'**.

'Crown Jewel' Gardenia has attractive dark green evergreen foliage on a plant that will grow only 2 feet in height and 5 feet in width. It has a mounding plant habit with white, intensely sweet fragrant flowers in summer. Use **'Crown Jewel'** as a low hedge, foundation plant, or in a group planting in a sunny, well-drained area.

Hardiness Zones: 7 to 10

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The North Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association and North Carolina Cooperative Extension are pleased to announce our third year of Showstopper Plants. Nominated by North Carolina nurserymen and selected by North Carolina Cooperative Extension horticulture experts, the 2010 Showstopper Plants are "must have" plants for any Carolina garden. These featured plants are promising new cultivars or iron-clad plants that will thrive across the region. They are featured in *Extension Gardener* Learning Centers at home and garden shows throughout North Carolina.

SHRUB: **'LO & BEHOLD™ BLUE CHIP' BUTTERFLY BUSH**

(*Buddleja* 'Blue Chip' PP #19991)



Photo credit: Dr. Dennis Werner

FEW DECIDUOUS PLANTS ARE AS COLORFUL IN THE SUMMER garden as the Butterfly Bush, which is typically a 6- to 8-foot shrub. Thanks to the plant breeding efforts of Dr. Dennis Werner at NC State University, a hardy miniature *Buddleja* called **'Lo & Behold Blue Chip'** is available for Carolina gardens.

'Blue Chip' has a symmetrical, compact spreading habit with violet-blue flowers. The blossoms are fragrant and possess malformed anthers that produce little to no pollen. Due to the tiny number of seed heads formed, **'Blue Chip'** flowers prolifically throughout the summer and fall.

Butterfly Bushes require full sun and decent soil drainage. Because of the low spreading habit (2 to 3 feet in height) of **'Lo & Behold Blue Chip'**, it is perfect for use in the front of landscape beds or in mass plantings. As with most *Buddlejas*, **'Blue Chip'** will attract butterflies in abundance. It is deer resistant, drought tolerant and compact enough to grow in containers on your sunny patio.

Hardiness Zones: 5 to 10



NC STATE UNIVERSITY'S LEGENDARY PLANTSMAN, THE LATE JC Raulston, found this wild plant in 1985 while visiting Korea. It showed exceptional vigor and was drastically different than the other native Japanese snowbell trees observed. The star-like flowers are 1 inch across, larger than most in this *Styrax* species.

The foliage on this deciduous tree is dark green and leathery in texture. **'Emerald Pagoda'** also has larger than average sized leaves. This ornamental tree can be grown in full sun or part shade. It prefers soil rich in organic matter that maintains good drainage. The ideal planting location is where the tree is able to receive a couple of hours of shade each day.

'Emerald Pagoda' is an upright, vase-shaped deciduous tree that is rather slow growing. In ten years this cultivar will have grown to 10 feet tall with a spread of 8 feet. At maturity this tree can become 30 feet tall and 20 feet wide. This *Styrax* would make an excellent patio tree where its interesting bark and fragrant flowers can be seen up close. A great choice where a small tree is desired.

Hardiness Zones: 5 to 8



PINK MUHLY GRASS IS AN ABSOLUTE SHOWSTOPPER SOURCE OF late season color. As an ornamental grass, it is a great compliment to those landscape beds with fading summer annuals. The delicate plumes of flower panicles create a striking pink haze above the foliage.

This perennial is attractive individually but really makes a big show when used in a mass planting. **Pink Muhly Grass** can reach a height of 4 feet and a width of 3 feet. Give it plenty of sunshine and transplant into soil that is well drained.

A North American native, **Pink Muhly Grass** sounds too good to be true. Long-lived with little to no insect or disease pests, this ornamental grass is perfect for the low-maintenance garden. **Muhly Grass** tolerates heat, humidity, drought and poor soil.

Hardiness Zones: 6 to 9

TREE: **'EMERALD PAGODA' JAPANESE SNOWBELL**

(*Styrax japonicus* 'Emerald Pagoda')



Photo credit: JC Raulston Arboretum

PERENNIAL: **PINK MUHLY GRASS**

(*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)



Photo credit: Dr. Dennis Werner