

north carolina's  
2013

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# SHOWSTOPPER plants



Photo credit: J.C. Raulston Arboretum

PERENNIAL: *'FIREBALL' HIBISCUS*  
(*Hibiscus 'Fireball' PPAF*)

What has showy 10-inch red flowers from June through August? Why, it is the 'Fireball' Hardy Hibiscus and it has dazzled gardeners since its introduction in 2001. An attractive plant, 'Fireball' reaches a mature height of four feet.

Special to this plant is its ability to thrive in heat and humidity. Grow this tough perennial in full sun with evenly moist soil. In addition to its heat tolerance this perennial hibiscus is cold hardy from Zone 5 to Zone 9. In other words, 'Fireball' can be grown anywhere in North Carolina.

'Fireball's' combination of impressive red flowers plus attractive, deeply cut green foliage with distinctive purple colored veins gives this plant charm for any sunny garden. Keep the soil from drying out and you'll soon learn why this plant is a true showstopper!

Hardiness Zones: 5 to 9



Photo credit: J.C. Raulston Arboretum

TREE: *CHINESE PISTACHE*  
(*Pistacia chinensis*)

Tough as nails, drought tolerant and pest free are all terms used to describe this year's Showstopper tree selection, the Chinese Pistache. This beautiful medium-sized tree is perfect for both the home landscape and the urban environment.

An unattractive almost gawky tree when young, Chinese Pistache develops into an outstanding specimen tree with an umbrella-like crown. At maturity this tree will obtain a height of 40 feet and a spread of 25 to 35 feet.

Chinese Pistache has finely divided, lustrous green foliage during the summer months and terrific fall color. The fiery orange and red leaves make this Asian native one of the prettiest trees in autumn. Other than a requirement for well drained soil, this plant will flourish in nearly every soil type. Transplant one into your landscape – you'll be glad you did.

Hardiness Zones: 6 to 9

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The North Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association and North Carolina Cooperative Extension are pleased to announce our sixth year of Showstopper Plants. Nominated by North Carolina nurserymen and selected by NC Cooperative Extension horticulture experts, the 2013 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: *'AZTEC FIRE' ANISE*  
(*Illicium mexicanum 'Aztec Fire'*)



SHRUB: *'SHOAL CREEK' CHASTETREE*  
(*Vitex agnus-castus 'Shoal Creek'*)



SHRUB: *'GLOWING EMBERS' HYDRANGEA*  
(*Hydrangea macrophylla 'Glowing Embers'*)



Looking for an evergreen shrub with handsome green colored foliage? If yes, look no further; *'Aztec Fire' Anise* is the plant for you. This landscape gem is a first cousin to the more commonly known Florida Anise. Unique to this Anise, or *Illicium*, this plant produces burgundy colored flowers.

*'Aztec Fire'* *Illicium* will grow in full sun but really thrives in partial shade. Give this Mexican native plenty of room to grow. Typically this Anise will reach a height of eight feet and a width of six feet. Best of all it has a natural pyramidal growth habit.

An evergreen beauty, *'Aztec Fire'* is best utilized in a large shrub border. Plants also will fit nicely into a naturalized landscape planting. One interesting note, Anise shrubs grown in full sun will possess lighter green foliage than those grown in partial shade. Consider this winner for your home landscape.

Hardiness Zones: 7 to 9

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If you are looking for a plant that doesn't need any tender loving care, you won't find a better choice than *'Shoal Creek' Chastetree*. Native to southern Europe and western Asia, Chastetree – or *Vitex* – grows into a multi-trunked large shrub ranging in height from 10 to 15 feet with a broad, spreading growth habit. Unlike the typical species, *'Shoal Creek'* is an improved cultivar that possesses larger flower spikes of violet-blue flowers.

*'Shoal Creek' Chastetree* thrives in full sunlight and will tolerate most soil conditions as long as the soil is well drained. This plant selection is exceptionally more vigorous in growth than other varieties of *Vitex*. Once this shrub becomes established it is very low-maintenance and extremely drought tolerant.

In addition to its attractive violet-blue flowers, *'Shoal Creek'* has interesting star-shaped, aromatic foliage that is grayish green on top with gray underneath. *'Shoal Creek'* *Vitex* flowers attract both hummingbirds and butterflies, giving this Showstopper Plant an added bonus.

Hardiness Zones: 6 to 9

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What deciduous shrub makes a dazzling flower display for gardeners across the South? Why, it is *'Glowing Embers' Hydrangea*. Abundant 8-inch flowerheads start out white colored, then turn to pink and eventually fade to a reddish-pink color.

Grow this garden plant in moist, well drained soil with ample amounts of organic matter. *'Glowing Embers,'* like most Mophead Hydrangeas, is sensitive to drought-like conditions and will be the first plant in the landscape to wilt when dry.

These Hydrangeas will grow in full sun but they grow best in partial shade. To insure the clearest pink flower coloration, add lime to the planting soil to help achieve a soil pH between 6 and 6.5. Tried and true in all of North Carolina, this shrub should prove to be another Showstopper!

Hardiness Zones: 6 to 9