

UT Gardens 2009 Best in Show

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Note: A 'K' for Knoxville or 'J' for Jackson at the end of each plant description indicates that it is growing only at that test garden. No symbol indicates it is growing at both gardens.

Best in Show Annual

Gomphrena 'Fireworks' from PanAmerican was a new hybrid variety that impressed everyone with its season-long show of numerous large pink blooms that looked like miniature pompoms. Due to its height (3') and full growth habit, this rangy annual was best sited in the middle to back of a bed. The **'Las Vegas'** series from Benary also performed very well, with numerous blooms covering a much tidier habit.

Best Old Annual Variety

Begonia 'BIG Rose with Bronze Leaf' from Benary produced masses of large, self-cleaning blooms above lush foliage. Tolerant of both shade and sun locations, this large, upright begonia was a standout in our gardens from early spring until frost.

Best New 2009 Annual Variety

Egyptian Papyrus (Cyperus) King Tut® was a dramatic grass-like plant reaching 4-6'. Its large heads of thread-like leaves were an exotic foil for nearby flowering plants. **Umbrella Grass (Cyperus) Baby Tut®** also deserves mention. It grew 2-3' tall and had large heads of strap-like leaves. Both varieties tolerated normal to boggy soil conditions. Both from Proven Winners.

Top Annual Performers

Blanket Flower (Gaillardia) 'Mesa Yellow' – The cheery, non-fading bloom color and vigorous upright growth habit of this plant never failed to capture visitors' attention. This PanAmerican variety is the first commercial yellow blanket flower from seed.

Celosia 'Fresh Look Gold' – This striking annual definitely lived up to its name, remaining fresh all season long. Its rich gold plumes really stood out against the bright green foliage of this upright variety. An AAS Winner.

Coleus (Solenostemon) 'Lifeline' (from Proven Winners), **'Redhead'** and **'Trusty Rusty'** (from Ball Flora), – Grown for its foliage rather than its bloom, coleus always provides an excellent contrast to flowering plants in the landscape. Of all the varieties trialed this year, these three were consistent favorites, showing especially exciting color and texture combinations as well as excellent pest resistance and uniformity.

Cupflower (*Nierembergia*) ‘Augusta Blue Skies’ – Delicate light blue blooms covered this low mounding plant throughout the summer. The finely textured foliage added to its appeal. From Proven Winners.

Geranium (*Pelargonium*) Daredevil® Rosita from Proven Winners boasted a gorgeous pink color and vigorous growth. The **Tornado** and **Caliente series** from Syngenta performed very well in the landscape and offered a wide range of color choices. The **Pinto series** (also from Syngenta) showed excellent heat and humidity tolerance for a seed-grown variety.

Lantana ‘Lucky Pure Gold’ – The rich golden blooms of this mounding annual contrasted beautifully with its dark green foliage. Butterflies and visitors alike were attracted to this plant in the gardens. From Ball Flora.

Ornamental Pepper (*Capsicum annuum*) ‘Sangria’ from PanAmerican was the talk of the ornamental peppers this year. This non-pungent cultivar produced a continuous display of 1 ½” tropical punch purple and red pepper right up to frost on 12 by 18” plants. (J)

Petunia Supertunia® Vista Bubblegum – This incredibly vigorous petunia from Proven Winners was literally covered in masses of clear pink blooms from early summer to frost. **‘Shock Wave Denim’** from PanAmerican boasted a wonderfully unique lavender-blue bloom color. And for early to mid-summer show, **‘Debonair Dusty Rose’** (also from PanAmerican) was a frequent visitor favorite, with an unusual pink and cream bicolor bloom.

Purple Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum*) var. *rubrum* and **‘Little Red Riding Hood’** from Proven Winners. These ornamental grasses were beautiful in the landscape. Their burgundy foliage and seed heads provided great color, movement, and texture. For early to mid-summer interest, **Ornamental Millet (*Pennisetum*) ‘Jade Princess’** from PanAmerican was a fantastic selection. It boasted enormous burgundy plumes against strappy, chartreuse foliage.

Sweet Potato Vine (*Ipomoea*) Illusion™ Emerald Lace – This vigorous vine worked well in the landscape and in containers where it could spill over the edge. Its finely cut chartreuse foliage was a great foil to nearby flowering plants. From Proven Winners.

Vinca (*Catharanthus*) ‘Pacifica XP Cranberry’ (from Ball) and **‘Viper Purple’** (from Floranova) – Both of these varieties exhibited bright, intense blooms on upright, uniform plants throughout the growing season. They showed excellent heat tolerance.

Zinnia ‘Zahara Yellow’ from Ball has the compact growth habit and disease resistance of the ‘Profusion’ series but in a bright lemon zesty yellow, a color that makes surrounding plants pop. (J)

Top Perennials

***Agave ovatifolia* - Whale's Tongue Hardy Century Plant** – This *Agave* reaches 3' by 5' in five years. The symmetrical formation of its wide, blue-gray leaves give it a formal appearance in the garden. This is one of the best agaves for colder, wetter climates and thrives in Zone 7 with adequate drainage. (J)

***Aster ericoides* f. *prostratus* 'Snow Flurry' - Snow Flurry Heath Aster.** As the Latin name implies this is a low growing aster that is ideally suited for rock gardens, ledges or the front of perennial borders. Forming a dense mat of fine textured leaves this fall bloomer grows to 6 to 8 inches tall and 2-3' wide. In the fall it covers itself with thousands of small white daisy like flowers. Prefers full sun and tolerates moderate drought conditions.

***Hakonechloa macra* 'All Gold'** - a new dwarf form of Japanese forest grass. The bamboo-like leaves are bright gold in part sun and more chartreuse in full shade. Prefers fertile, moist, well-drained soil. (K)

***Helianthus angustifolius* 'First Light'** – First Light Swamp Sunflower. A great compact form of this native sunflower. Forms a nice deer-resistant compact clump of fuzzy linear leaves, topped from late September through October with terminal spikes of 2" bright gold daisies.

***Huechera* 'Citronelle'**- A sport off of 'Caramel', 'Citronelle' has leaves that are a beautiful chartreuse color. It prefers some afternoon shade to keep it from scorching but when grown in too much shade becomes greener. Being a hybrid of the southeastern species *H. villosa* allows it to handle heat and humidity. In summer it is topped with tall spikes of little white flowers.

***Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Foxtrot'**- Fountain Grass – A well bodied grass of symmetrical form that reaches 3 ½ to 4 ½ feet tall and wide a round. Even though 'Foxtrot' is a large grass that has a neat and tidy appearance. In the late summer, an abundance of smoky purple blooms appear and age to a buff brown that resembles a fox's tail.

***Rudbeckia subtomentosa* 'Henry Eilers'**- This charming perennial produces abundant yellow quilled petals surrounding a brown button center. This *Rudbeckia* blooms at 4 to 5 feet beginning in August and continuing through September. It looks superb as a specimen or in a mass planting and makes a great cut flower with strong stems and interesting, long lasting bloom.

***Sedum bithynicum* (*S. pallidum* var. *bithynicum*)- Turkish Sedum-** Seeing this low growing, ice blue sedum crawl around your garden will make you wonder why this sedum took so long to become available in the trade. Topping out at 1" high the spreading sedum is drought tolerant and hardy in zones 6 to 9. *S. bithynicum* puts on a white flower show in late summer. In the winter the foliage tips turn a rich pink. It is more tolerant of shade than most sedums, increasing its usefulness in the garden. (J)

Sedum kamtshaticum - This very cold tolerant sedum is hardy in zones 4 to 9. It has 2 inch long slightly serrated leaves on rosettes that are evergreen and bronze up during the winter. It forms a dense carpet that reaches 4 to 8 inches tall by 15 inches wide, and like most sedums is very drought tolerant. Yellow blooms turn to orange and create a warm multi-color effect in the summer. (J)

***Yucca recurvifolia* ‘Margaritaville’**-This cultivar’s leaves have a weeping habit, thus the species name. ‘Margaritaville’ has creamy white and light green variegation on its long, wide leaves. As a specimen plant, it adds interest to the garden all year long. It eventually reaches a height of 6’ tall and forms a thick trunk. The 3’ tall flower stalk appears in mid-summer and boasts creamy white flowers. It is hardy in zones 7 to 9, and requires good drainage and full sun.

Top Herbs

***Ocimum basilicum* ‘Boxwood’ – Basil.** A compact, small-leafed basil which looks like boxwood and is more uniform than other dwarf basil. Very bushy and productive, it is great for pesto and other culinary uses, as well as ornamental. 12-16 inches tall.

***Abelmoschus esculentus* ‘Star of David’ – Star of David Okra.** This hibiscus relative boasts an absolutely beautiful bloom – 6 inches across, light cream with a deep burgundy center. It produces fat, ornamental pods, often used in crafts, whose cross-section resembles the Star of David. Can grow to 6 feet tall.

***Ceratotheca triloba* – African Foxglove.** This easy to grow annual resembles a small shrub in the garden. Attractive dark green foliage and red stems set off the large, elegant, foxglove-like blooms of lavender or white. Has been used medicinally in its native Africa. 3-5 feet tall.

***Hedychium coronarium* – White Ginger Lily.** This tropical perennial has overwintered in our garden. Intricate white blooms are often said to resemble a flying butterfly, and are incredibly fragrant as well. Extracts have been used cosmetically and it also makes a good cutflower. Likes wet soil; can grow to 6 feet.

***Philadelphus* ‘Snowbelle’ – Mock Orange.** This compact cultivar was covered in large, double white flowers that were also very fragrant from late spring to early summer. Hollow stems have been used as pipes and fragrance extract has culinary and cosmetic uses. Upright, deciduous shrub can grow to 3-4 feet tall and wide.

Top Roses

***Rosa* ‘My Girl’ - This Easy Elegance®** rose is a 2008 introduction. Has round, deep pink buds that are held in clusters of 5 to 30 which open to ruffly blossoms so full they almost hide the centers. Resistant to black spot. Compact with upright habit and good rebloomer.

***Rosa* ‘Black Cherry’** – A floribunda rose with almost-black buds which lead to the most alluring red roses. Disease-resistant plant reblooms frequently. **(K)**

Rosa 'Love and Peace' - This classic upright, hybrid tea grows to 4-5 feet by 3 feet. Five-inch large flowers of golden yellow edged with pink. Each flower has a minimum petal count of 40, surrounded by dark green glossy foliage. Fruity scent.

Rosa 'Easy Does It' – A floribunda rose chosen as the only All-America Rose Selections 2010 winner! Filled with warm colors from mango and orange to peachy pink and apricot, these 4-inch double blooms are delightfully ruffled, unfurling their 26 to 40 petals in layers over their long bloomtime. Grows 3'-4' wide and just as tall.

Top Tropicals

Agave americana var. mediopicta 'Alba' – White-Striped Century Plant – A medium sized century plant that grows 2 by 2 feet in a pot with a bold cream colored central stripe and blue green margins. The agaves of this species set many “pups” with which to propagate. Grow in full sun, and sharp drainage. ‘Alba’ should be brought indoors before frost.

Calotropis gigantea - Crown Flower – This tropical milkweed family member grows 5 to 6 feet tall in the garden. It has clusters of waxy lavender flowers. Each ¾” flower consists of five pointed petals and a small, elegant "crown" rising from the center. The plant has large, waxy, oval shaped leaves that are silver green in color. Crown Flower widens the eyes of everyone who sees it in the gardens, and is a great “stump the experts” specimen. (J)

Colocasia esculenta 'Coffee Cups' – Elephant Ear – This is a great tropical addition to any garden because of the unique shape of the leaves and the fantastic black stems. Grow this 5-6' plant in full sun to light afternoon shade for a dramatic addition to the back of the border. The dark purple to black stem color compliments annuals, perennials and blooming tropicals with dramatic appeal. The cup like leaf also attract wildlife such as dragonflies and birds by providing natural water dishes.

Colocasia esculenta 'Pink China' – Elephant Ear - Maybe the most cold hardy Colocasia. Hardy to zone 6. The pink stems really stand out and are striking against their shiny green leaves. Grows 4' to 6' tall.

Ensete superbum – Thai Banana - Thai banana is striking for its pronounced erect form. Its bright green leaves are large and sturdy reaching 8' long with a width of nearly 2'. Hardy to 30 F. (K)

Furcraea foetida 'Mediopicta' – Mediterranean Hemp - A close relative to the Agave, this usually trunk-less succulent can reach sizes of 3' by 3' or larger, depending on the size of the container its grown in. A decorative creamy band occurs down the middle of the long, wavy green leaves. This plant gives the dramatic look of an agave but is soft to the touch, lacking the spines that agaves possess. It performs best in full sun in a well drained soil. Hardy in zones 9 to 11, it must be brought in during the winter months where frosts occur.

***Musa velutina* - Pink Velvet Banana** – Pink Velvet Banana. This ornamental banana produces purple/pink flower bracts and small pink fruits that are laden with pea sized seeds. Rarely exceeds six feet tall. Hardy for us in the UT Gardens in Knoxville. **(K)**

***Sansevieria cylindrica*- Cylindrical Mother-in-Law's Tongue** – A distinctive and architectural plant with unique cylindrical leaves that grow upright and stiff. The leaves are smooth and form a fan shape as the plant grows. This succulent requires little water and makes a fine house plant, but planting outdoors into a bed brings a modern and elegant look to your design. Being a Mother-in-Law's Tongue it must be brought indoors before the temperatures drop.

Top Trees and Shrubs

***Acer palmatum* 'Peaches and Cream'** – **Smooth Japanese Maple**. This Australian introduction makes a small tree or shrub about 10' tall and wide. Spring leaves emerge cream, to cream with green highlights. Pale rose-red at tips. Deep green, prominent veins round out the variegated patterns. Fall coloration is yellow with darker tips. **(K)**

***Cercis chinensis* 'Don Egolf'** - **Chinese Redbud** – A handsome multi-stemmed shrub that matures to 10 by 10 feet. It forms a vase shape allowing space for other plants. The leaves are leathery and dark, but its blooms are the real show. Super abundant deep mauve-pink flowers cover the stems at a young age. 'Don Egolf' grows well in part shade to full sun and shows a complete absence of brown fruits, increasing its visual appeal.

***Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Spirited'** - **Hinoki Falsecypress** - A sport of *C. obtusa* 'Crippsii', this evergreen has beautiful golden lace-like foliage. Grows to 4' tall and 3' wide. Tolerant of full sun.

***Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Devon Cream'** - **Japanese Falsecypress** - A sport of the cultivar 'Boulevard'. In spring this selection has a flush of white new growth. Leaves are blue when they fade. Plant has an upright cone form to 6' tall. **(K)**

***Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Snow'** – **Japanese Falsecypress**. This Falsecypress has a fine textured appearance with dense foliage that has a soft look and feel to it. Tips of the foliage are white and become more muted in winter giving an almost blue appearance. Best grown in partial shade and will maintain an upright mounded shape as it matures to five feet.

***Cotoneaster glaucophyllus* - Gray Leaf Cotoneaster** – This cotoneaster is a small to medium dense evergreen shrub that can reach up to 5 feet tall. The leaves are small and have a distinct gray color from the gray pubescence. White flowers appear in summer followed by orange-red to red colored berries that are retained throughout the winter. **(K)**

***Egdeworthia chrysantha* – Paper Bush** – This distinctive 3 to 5' tall and wide shrub is a real stand out in the garden. It drops its blue-green 5" long ovate leaves in fall leaving attractive 3/4" terminal flower buds. The buttery, cream yellow colored flowers are born in nodding umbels in early spring over a long period and are slightly fragrant. This is a neat plant that is not very well known, but is great for year around interest in a protected area of the landscape in zones 7.

***Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Vaughn's Lillie' – Oak Leaf Hydrangea** – Dense full heads of pearl-white flowers smother this handsome plant. They emerge a soft, lime green, maturing to pearly white, and then age to pink blush. It also produces blooms over a long season. The plant grows with short internodes, making for a shorter and more compact plant than most other oakleaf hydrangeas. Attractive emerald green foliage turns burgundy red in the fall. Grows to 3'-5' tall in ten years and performs best in full-sun to partial-shade.

***Ilex verticillata* 'Sparkleberry' – Winterberry Holly** – Deciduous native holly with a suckering habit and tolerant of moist conditions. Male and female plants, with the females producing red berries persistent into winter. Good fruit set persists into March. Grows to 12' tall and 10' wide. Use 'Apollo' to pollinate this U.S. National Arboretum introduction.

***Juniperus x media* 'Daub's Frosted' - Juniper** - Sun loving, drought resistant, mounding shrub that is sure to delight in the landscape. 'Daub's Frosted' will remain low to the ground staying under 2 1/2' and spreading out to around 6'. Foliage will be yellow in the spring fading to a green/yellow in the summer. During winter deep gold stems with purple tips make this a great juniper for winter interest.

***Lagerstroemia indica* 'Dynamite' – Crepemyrtle** – Grows to 15' tall and one of the best deep red, tree form crepemyrtles available. Mildew resistant. New foliage is burgundy in color changing to green.

***Metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'Ogon' – Dawn Redwood** – Pyramidal tree with a fine textured foliage and peeling bark. Prominent winter buds. Golden yellow foliage is bright and vibrant throughout the summer. Foliage turns bronze in the fall and then drops. Grows to 70 feet tall and 15 feet wide. Thrives in full sun. Tolerant of wet to well-drained soil.

***Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Summer Wine'- Ninebark** – This compact 5' by 5' shrub produces fine deeply cut leaves. The foliage is a deep purple color and sets off the profuse, soft pink flowers that appear in mid- summer. 'Summer Wine' combines the compact branching of 'Nana' with the dark foliage of the much larger 'Diabolo'.

***Picea abies* 'Acrocona' – Norway Spruce** – Each spring this spruce covers itself in rosy pink cones which slowly fade to an attractive tan. 'Acrocona' means “cones on branch tips” and this cone placement also causes the tree to spread horizontally rather than obtaining the pyramidal shape of the species. It will ultimately attain a size of 20 feet in both height and width. Full sun and a well-drained soil. **(K)** *Not tolerant of West TN climate.*

***Platyclusus (Thuja) orientalis* 'Morgan' – Oriental Arborvitae** - A woody chameleon, 'Morgan' is known for its exceptional ability to change foliage color. Plant will grow between two inches and four inches per year, reaching around three feet at maturity depending on growing conditions. Size, color, and texture make this a great plant, suitable replacement for Dwarf Alberta Spruce.

***Pseudolarix amabilis* - Golden Larch** - This rare and unusual deciduous conifer is graceful and airy with its open branches and symmetrical pyramidal form. Branching habit and cones provide winter interest. Striking color in fall. The large but slow growing tree often puts on only 6 inches a year. Grows slowly to form a broad conical shape. Most top out at 40 to 70 feet tall, but can reach over 100 feet. **(K)** *Not tolerant of West TN climate.*

***Tsuga canadensis* 'La Bar White Tip' - Canadian Hemlock.** Another white tipped evergreen, this hemlock has bright white tips on the branches that give the appearance of a light dusting of snow. It maintains the color year round for four season interest. Irregular to pyramidal growth habit. Our specimen seems to be doing well and maintaining its color with partial afternoon shade. **(K)** *Not tolerant of West TN climate.*

***Viburnum plicatum* 'Summer Snowflake' – Japanese Snowball Viburnum** - a compact, multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub which typically matures to 10' tall with a 5' spread. Non-fragrant, creamy white flowers in small, flat-topped umbels (to 2-4" diameter) appear in a profuse spring bloom, with sporadic continued bloom occurring throughout the summer (hence the cultivar name). Fertile flowers give way in late summer to orangish-red, berry-like drupes which mature to black. Fruits are attractive to birds and wildlife. Reddish to bronze-purple fall color. Fruits, flowers and autumn foliage color may all be simultaneously present on plants in early fall.

***Viburnum macrocephalum* 'Tom Clark'** - Chinese Snowball Viburnum. Valued for its outstanding softball-sized, hydrangea-like blooms, this white-blooming semi-evergreen shrub blooms in spring and often (as is our case) puts on quite a show in fall. We have two located along the greenway fence that you can't help but notice from Neyland Drive. Maturing to 12 feet or more, this is one plant that needs plenty of room in a sunny to part-sun location.