

University of Tennessee Gardens - Jackson

2022 Best & Beautiful Report

Prepared:

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This summary and the full trial results are available at:

west.tennessee.edu/ornamentals/

The University of Tennessee Gardens in Jackson trialed more than 225 varieties of annuals, perennials, vegetables, and herbs in 2022. Trials were planted during the month of May, and data was collected at regular intervals between the months of June- September. Overall, the growing conditions were good throughout the season. Temperatures were above average in June and July and rainfall was average. Supplemental overhead irrigation was used as needed especially in late summer when conditions became dry. This year we grew petunias, begonias, torenia, and Scaevola in containers as well as in the ground beds while Calibrachoa was only grown in pots. Our approach to preparation of the planting beds was different than in years past. The beds were not tilled prior to plant installation. A planting auger was used to plant annuals in mass, and granular fertilizer was broadcast over the planting area before mulching. All container grown plants were feed three times with a water soluble fertilizer.

*In the descriptions below, the () following plant names identifies the company that provided plants/seed to the UT Gardens Jackson for trials and demonstration.

Best in Show

This group has been selected based upon the outstanding aesthetic qualities that they contribute to landscape and container design.

Begonia Spreading Hula™ Pink (PanAmerican Seed) – Trailing well branched with lots of small flowers in proportion to the foliage, began flowering early and continued until frost. Six plants from a cell pack filled out a 14" tall and wide square pot with a thriller in the center forming a beautiful skirt. **Spreading Hula™ Pink** was our favorite followed by **Hula™ Red** and **Hula™ Blush**.

Begonia Surefire® Cherry Cordial™ (Proven Winners) – Rich burgundy leaves with deep green undertones are complimented with cherry red blooms. This 18-24" begonia is sure to hold your attention. **Surefire® White™** was also a favorite with an upright arching habit. Bright green leaves had pronounced veins and were frilled around the edges adding to the appeal. The large white flowers showcased the bright yellow pompom like centers.

Strawflower Granvia® Gold (Suntory) – Plants reached 18-20” tall and were well branched. The glowing yellow 1.5” blooms lasted for weeks and were produced up until a killing freeze. The foliage remained mildew free unlike most strawflowers. The plant would benefit from deadheading, but does continue to flower producing new blooms above the old. The paper-like blooms make the flower perfect for dried arrangements.

Celosia ‘Flamma Orange’ (2022 All American Selection Winner) – Intense fiery orange flowers were produced in profusion on strong plants that matured to 2’ tall. The flowers did not fade, justifying its name sake ‘Flamma.’ Well branched with the older spikes continuing to elongate and flower. Late in the summer the mature spikes curve down with new flowers continuing to form at the tips growing up, reminiscent of a festive Chinese dragon head.

Papyrus Graceful Grasses® Queen Tut™ (Proven Winners) – Slow to get started in the 3” pots but once planted in the ground it took off. The plant produced around a hundred 18” stems by the end of the season topped with a cute explosion of tufts. Works great in the ground as well as in containers where a smaller thriller is needed. Cut stems make a nice addition to flower arrangements.

Sweet Potato Vine Sweet Caroline Upside Black Coffee™ Sweet Caroline - Upside Key Lime™ (Proven Winners) – Both cultivars possess a strong climbing habit and make an impactful statement. Three plants of each cultivar were planted at the base of a 10’ tall by 4’ wide trellis. Black Coffee over took the trellis faster, but the combination was beautiful with hints of Key Lime shining through. The trellis was completely covered by the end of July. For future planting the ratio of Key Lime should be greater than Black Coffee.

Lantana Little Lucky™ Lavender (Ball FloraPlant) – Flowers open to a soft yellow and age to a beautiful lavender. Plants matured to 18” tall and 28” wide making a uniform dense mound of flowers all summer long. Little Lucky™ White was also a winner. It had the same physical attributes as Lavender but in pure white.

Lantana Luscious® Royale Lemon Tart™ (Proven Winners) – The Luscious® series of lantana has performed exceptionally well over the years with its nonstop flower power and ability to perform in heat and drought. The yellow flowers of Lemon Tart are perhaps the brightest sunny yellow we have ever grown and stand out against the deep green foliage. Plants grew to 2 ½ to 3’ tall and wide.

Petunia SureShot™ Blueberries & Cream (Ball FloraPlant) – What a great name for a petunia that does indeed evoke blueberries and cream! Plants produced lots of deep blue blooms edged in white all season long. It did well in the ground until August and looked great spilling over the side of the pot until frost without deadheading. Unlike most multi-colored petunias we have trialed in the past, the cream edge remained consistent throughout the season.

Coleus ColorBlaze® Mini Me™ Watermelon (Proven Winners) – Wow! Wow! Wow! Want a coleus that does not look tired at the end of September? Mini Me™ Watermelon takes the prize. Chartreuse edged leaves are burgundy with a bright watermelon center providing a beautiful contrast. They almost glowed in the landscape. The plants were well-branched having as many as 30 stems and reached 3' tall and 2/3 as wide. A few plants produced one or two branches that had no watermelon accent in them at all, but this did not take away from the overall beauty. Plants produce no flowers to take away from the beautiful foliage throughout the entire season.

Top Performers

This group has been selected based upon their season long performance and endurance of growing conditions in the UT Gardens Jackson.

Angelonia Sungelonia® Deep Pink (Suntory) – This Angelonia cultivar has a bushy full upright growth habit. Plants consistently produced elegant, deep pink flower spikes. They proved heat and humidity tolerant, grew to 16" tall and wide, and bloomed continuously from planting until frost unlike other Angelonias which tend to play out earlier in the season.

Calylophus Ladybird™ Series Lemonade, Sunglow (Proven Winners) – We first trialed the Ladybird™ series in 2021 and couldn't say enough good things about them. These came back in the garden in 2022, and we were just as impressed this year as last. The feathery foliage provides a soft texture for the garden and is complemented by beautiful, yellow blooms. The cultivar Lemonade produces pale, lemon-yellow flowers that fade to a complementary peach color while Sunglow produces bright, sunshine-yellow flowers that fade to a deeper, mustard yellow. Use the compact 4-8" tall plants that spread 18-24" at the front of your flower bed as a mass planting to create a temporary groundcover or in containers spilling over the edge and these cheery flowers will brighten your day until frost.

Heliotrope Augusta® Lavender (Proven Winners) – When we received this Heliotrope in 2021 we thought, "This will be a disappointment." Well, Augusta® Lavender proved us wrong. "Don't hate me because I'M BEAUTIFUL" is Proven Winner's tag line for it, and it is indeed beautiful. We were impressed even more when it returned in the spring and flowered until frost. The lavender flowers were produced in abundance on the upright mounding plant. It did not skip a beat in our heat and humidity and worked great at the front of the border and in pots too. It is always a joy to be surprised by the toughness of a plant in a genus that has not held up to our growing conditions in the past. Augusta® Lavender takes the prize for that quality again this year.

Nemesia Aromance® Mulberry (Proven Winners) – Nemesia Aromance® Mulberry is another plant that has surprised us with an uncharacteristic vigor for its genus. From the time we potted up plugs in March until the killing frosts claimed them in the garden beds, this plant was a winner. They reached 10" tall and 2' wide. We alternated them in the bed with Juncus Curly

Wurly thinking it would be a fun combination and it grew so well that it nearly covered up Curly Wurly completely. Despite our heat, it continued to flower with the temps in the 90's with no deadheading or cutting back. Oh! and let's not forget the fragrance, a lovely mix of vanilla and baby powder.

Coleus Premium Sun Ruby Heart (PanAmerican Seed) – Perhaps the most impressive seed grown coleus we have grown. The tops of leaves are red while the underside is yellow-green, providing long-lasting colors for use as a landscape component or container companion. Older leaves on plants growing in full sun fade to a rust color. Plants begin to flower in late September.

Salvia 'Blue Chill' (BallFloraPlant) – Provides a light blue hue in the garden. Well-branched, free-flowering from Spring through Summer. Pale Blue 10-14" flower spikes in an abundance were produced on bushy plants that reached 3' tall and continued to bloom from the time of planting until a killing freeze. The tubular pale blue flowers emerging from dense pastel green calyxes are a favorite of pollinators. Unlike most of the newer salvias produced by cuttings, it does not cycle in and out of bloom over the course of the summer. 'Blue Chill' is a hybrid of *S. longispicata* x *S. farinacea* (mealy cup sage) and looks like a farinacea on steroids.

Eggplant Icicle (2022 All America Selections Winner) – Robust 4' tall well branched plants produced an abundance of white Asian type eggplants right up until frost despite flea beetle damage which did not impact the overall vigor and health of the plants. Surprisingly plants did not require staking during the growing season even with their robust vegetative growth.

Vinca Soiree Kawaii® (Suntory) – We love all the Soiree Kawaii vinca series and can't say enough good things about them. They are like no other vincas on the market. Plants were covered with solid blooms from time of planting until frost with flowers 1/2 the size or less of standard vinca. The plants were bushy and extremely well branched. We were particularly fond of Blueberry Kiss, Coral Reef, Red Shades, and White Peppermint. They looked great in containers as well as planted in the ground in mass. They require a sunny location and in well-drained soil for best performance.

Zinnia 'Profusion Red Yellow Bicolor' (2021 All America Selections Winner) – These plants start the season with a profusion of vibrant, bicolor flowers with a red center and yellow outer petals. As they age, the bright 2" flowers darken to a beautiful mix of magenta, and soft golden petals adding variation and allure. Blooms were continuous with new blooms opening on top of the canopy of the aging blooms and requiring no deadheading. This mix of colors and continuous transition was stunning in the landscape. Growing 8-14" tall and 12-18" wide, these plants make a statement at the front of a garden bed.

Petunia Supertunia Vista® Jazzberry (Proven Winners) – The electric fuchsia pink flowers almost glow in the garden. Jazzberry did great in the ground, and in containers where it spilled over the side of the pot. It continued to bloom until frost without deadheading. Like its cousins, Bubblegum and Silverberry, Jazzberry has excellent vigor and just keeps on going, but it is smaller, reaching 16" tall and 2' wide.

Consumer Favorites

These plants are favorites of those who frequent the garden and most commonly asked about by shoppers.

Calibrachoa Cabaret® Midnight Kiss (Ball FloraPlant) – This plant is perfection spilling over the edge of pots. Five plants filled a 14” round container easily. The bloom is purple with a light edge, dark eye, and a yellow throat making it complementary to many plant combinations.

Sunflower Suncredible™ Saturn (Proven Winners) –Suncredible™ Yellow was one of our top picks in 2019 and 2020. Saturn is just as outstanding with bright yellow petals darkening to bronze toward the center. The profusion of 3” flowers continue all summer on plants that are well branched and reaches 3’ x 3’. Saturn will make a delightful addition to any sunny garden.

Marigold ‘Big Duck Gold’ (2019 All American Selection Winner) – Since its debut in 2019 as an AAS winner it continues to be a favorite requiring no care which makes it perfect in the landscape. It also is a good choice for floral arrangements. The plants reached 2’ tall and were well-branched with deep green foliage and impressive, vibrant-yellow 2-3” flowers. Growth can be heavy and may require support from stakes or other plants to encourage upright habit. Plants began to lodge in September, but continue to produce large quantities of beautiful flowers.

Petunia Supertunia Mini Vista® Midnight (Proven Winners) – Blooms are velvety deep purple with a back throat and smaller in comparison to traditional petunia with 1” blooms. Plants reached 10-12” tall and 3’ wide. They performed well in the ground and also looked great spilling over the side of mixed containers.

Petunia Surfinia® Summer Double Rose™ (Suntory) – The small to medium size, deep pink double flowers, are unlike most double flowering petunias we have trialed in the past. Summer Double Rose™ blooms do not look like wads of wet tissue paper after a rain. It did well in the ground for a double petunia, looked great spilling over the side of the pot, and continued to bloom until frost without deadheading.

Portulaca Mojave® Yellow 2023 (Proven Winners) – The Mojave series of portulaca has long been a good garden performer. Mojave® Yellow 2023 is no exception. Its large showy deep yellow flowers cover the long growing plant all summer. They love full sun and have excellent drought tolerance.

Scaevola Surdiva® Blue Violet (Suntory) – Continuous profusion of intense violet blooms from planting to frost. Plants were uniform in height, survived in the ground with a wetter than normal early season, and looked great in our container trials, spilling over the side.

Torenia Summer Wave® (Suntory) – Trailing Torenia has long been our go-to for flowering trailers in a shady to partially shady spot. The Summer Wave® series is no exception. They all look good when used at the front of a border or spilling over the side of a container. One 3” pot was planted in each corner of a 14” tall and wide square pot. They filled out the pots quickly and trailed to the ground by the end of July. We particularly like the vigor and number of blooms on Large Violet, Large Blue and Large Amethyst.

Verbena Vanity (2022 All America Selections Winner) – The slender stems and narrow foliage provide a softening affect in the garden. Their role in the landscape is that of a complementary companion plant that highlights those around it. Plants matured to 26 -30” tall remaining upright throughout the growing season.

Zinnia Zesty™ Orange, Purple, Yellow (PanAmerican Seed) – Plants matured to 18 – 20” tall and wide, and were beautiful until they were hit by powdery mildew in mid- September. All three colors were vibrant with the flowers reaching 3” across. They did not require deadheading and new flowers set bloom over the top of old ones.

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