

# University of Tennessee Gardens - Jackson

## 2018 Best & Beautiful Report

### Prepared by:

Jason Reeves, Research Horticulturist  
Richard Gibson, Assistant Horticulturist

### This and the full trial results are available at:

[west.tennessee.edu/ornamentals/](http://west.tennessee.edu/ornamentals/)

The University of Tennessee Gardens in Jackson trialed more than 175 varieties of annuals, perennials, vegetables, and herbs in 2018. Trials were planted during the month of May, and data was taken June - September. Overall, the growing season was good. We had 69 days, from June through September 20<sup>th</sup> at or above 90°F which is above average. Nightly low temperatures were average. Rainfall in June and July were above average, and August and September were below average. Supplemental overhead irrigation was used as needed.

### Top-performing varieties

**Calibrachoa Superbells® Cardinal Star™** (Proven Winners) - Bright red flowers with yellow throat and stripes make for a showy plant. Cascades beautifully over the edge of a pot.

**Calibrachoa Cabaret® Midnight Blue** (Ball FloraPlant) – Plants dense with profusion of flowers all summer.

**Coleus ColorBlaze® Torchlight** (Proven Winners) - Bold foliage with red mid-vein surrounded by burgundy transitioning to deep green. Color is sharp and contrasting on 42” plants in September.

**Coleus Premium Sun Pineapple Surprise** (PanAmerican Seed) – Plants produce medium sized leaves that show attractive and sharp contrast from red center to chartreuse edges.

**Gomphrena Truffula™ Pink** (Proven Winners) - Awesome! Dense 18” compact plants are half the height of 'Fireworks'. Inflorescences are identical to 'Fireworks' but produced in greater abundance six weeks earlier.

**Helichrysum Silver Threads** (Selecta) – Well branched plants add fine texture with it needle-like silver foliage to pot. Performed as well in the ground as pots. Foliar damage and webbing from the American lady butterfly caterpillar can impede growth and webbing makes it somewhat unattractive up close.

**Okra 'Candle Fire'** – 2017 All American Selection Winner. Brighter red than other red cultivars with rounded pods. Great for eating as well as ornamental appeal. Plants continue to produce without harvesting older pods.

**Onion 'Warrior'** – 2016 All American Selection Winner. Robust attractive glaucous blue foliage looks great from early summer until nearly Christmas. Foliage reaches 18-24' tall. A beautiful ornamental as well as edible. Makes an awesome thriller in containers.

**Salvia interspecific 'Big Blue'** (PanAmerican Seed) – Upright long 5-8” blue flower spikes are held on strong stems above clean blue-grey leaves. Plants are very uniform and make a good cut flower. Very impressive performance especially to have been grown from seed. Great for pollinators!

**Scaevola Whirlwind™ Pink** (Proven Winners) – Perhaps the best Scaevola we have ever grown. The mass of medium pink flower really stands out in the garden beds as well as in a pot.

## Best of Show Varieties

**Angelonia AngelMist® Spreading Berry Sparkler** (Ball FloraPlant) – Unique two-toned pink and purple flowers cascade beautifully in a pot. Plants are dense and well branched. They performed well throughout the season both in the ground and in pots.

**Basil Amazel™** (Proven Winners) – Plants were resistant to downy mildew and had few flowers late in the season on 24” tall robust plants.

**Calibrachoa Superbells® Tangerine Punch™** (Proven Winners) – Tangerine orange edged flowers with a deep burgundy orange eye makes for a vibrant plant.

**Celosia argentea 'Asian Garden'** - 2017 All American Selection Winner. Long bright pink flowers are produced on well-branched robust plants all summer long. A pollinator magnet.

**Coleus ColorBlaze® Golden Dreams™** (Proven Winner) - Largest leaf of our coleus trials. It has striking chartreuse leaves with contrasting red veins. The plants were robust and reached 48” tall by mid-September. Produced no flowers to take away from its beautiful foliage. The most talked about plant in the garden.

**Coleus FlameThrower™ Salsa Roja** (Ball FloraPlant) – Small serrated burgundy leaves on 30” plants.

**Coleus Premium Shade Kong Jr.™ Scarlet** (PanAmerican Seed) – Plants possess large leaves with no inflorescences late in the season displaying a nice balance between scarlet and green foliage.

**Cuphea FloriGlory Diana** – 2018 All American Selection Winner. The magenta flowers are larger and darker colored than other Mexican Heather and produced in great abundance.

**Sweet Potato Vine SolarPower™ Black Heart and SolarPower™ Lime Heart** (Ball FloraPlant) – Large heart-shaped leaves on vigorous plants.

**Verbena EnduraScape™ White** (Ball FloraPlant) – Low growing plants with a pure white bloom.

## Consumer Favorites

**Calibrachoa MiniFamous® Neo Apricot Strike** (Selecta) – This semi-trailing calibrachoa produced beautiful Apricot blooms with red-eyed flowers all summer.

**Coleus FlameThrower™ Serrano** (Ball FloraPlant) – Plants display small serrated yellow leaves with bright red centers and veins on 18” plants.

**Coleus Pinkplosion** (Ball FloraPlant) – Stunning multicolor patterns on a frilly leaf showcase contrasting colors. Impressive 48” tall plants by mid-September with few inflorescences.

**Coleus Premium Shade Kong Jr.™ Lime Vein** (PanAmerican Seed) – Plants possess a medium green color with a scarlet mid-vein.

**Ruellia Machu™ Morado** (Proven Winners) – Well branched plants reached 24-30” tall. One-and-a-half-inch purple-blue flowers are held well above deep green leaves.

**Salvia Skyscraper™ Dark Purple** (Selecta) - Dense mass of plants covered in flower spikes. Few actual flowers appearing on each spike at once but the abundant colorful calyx makes the plant appealing.

**Sweet Potato Vine Sweet Caroline Kiwi** (Proven Winners) – Heavily lobed bright chartreuse leaves.

**Tomato ‘Garden Gem’** (Proven Winners) - This semi-determinate, snack-size tomato has a true heirloom taste, with disease resistance and high yield. It has firm, juicy fruit with a smooth, balanced flavor.

**Verbena Pops™ Pink 19** (Selecta) – Indeed this verbena pops in the garden with pink-purple flowers held above dense dark green leaves.

**Zinnia Double Zahara™ Bright Orange** (PanAmerican Seed) – Indeed a bright orange refreshing color. Nice mounding habit as with all Zahara zinnias.

## **Tried and True**

**Angelonia angustifolia ‘Serenita Pink’** – Masses of true pink flowers make it a standout in the garden. The seed grown Serenita series has always outperformed the cutting grown selection in the garden. 2014 All American Selection Winner.

**Begonia Megawatt™ series** (PanAmerican Seed) - Vigorous plants with lush foliage and flowers held nicely above the foliage.

**Celosia ‘Dracula’** (PanAmerican Seed) – A single large, dark purple-red flower head is produced on a stocky plant with reddish-purple leaves.

**Cuphea Vermillionaire®** - Has become a favorite since it came to market a few years ago. It is a blooming machine and loved by the bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds. Has also been winter hardy since 2014.

**Euphorbia Diamond Frost** (Proven Winners) – Always a standout in the gardens.

**Fennel ‘Antares’** – We were surprised by this plants heat tolerance and ornamental appeal. Not only does it produce a 4-5” fan-shaped pure white “bulb” it also has beautiful soft green foliage. The “bulb” is tasty raw but is especially good when roasted. It is a good food source for swallowtail caterpillars. 2017 AAS Winner.

**Gomphrena 'Fireworks'** (PanAmerican Seed) – Has been around for years but still a favorite. Each plant will reach 3' x 3' and covers itself with flowers from mid-summer until we have a killing frost. Pollinator favorite.

**Lantana Luscious® Citrus Blend Improved**– Vigorous plants with nonstop blooms reached 24" x 30" tall and wide by the end of the season.

**Banana Pepper 'Sweet Sunset'** – We can't say enough about this banana type pepper. It is indeed sweet just as the name implies. Each plant will produce 15 to 20, 6-7" tapered long fruits with 1 1/2" shoulders throughout the summer. The fruit changes from pale green to a light yellow, at which point it is ready to harvest. Leave it on the plant a bit longer, however, and it will burnish a handsome shade of red.

**Sweet Pepper 'Pretty N Sweet'** – Stand back! This pepper produces a profusion of sweet yellow, red, and orange fruits on 18" tall, well-branched plants. It is just as good an ornamental as it is good to eat making it a multi-purpose plant.

**Ornamental Pepper 'Sedona Sun'** - Awesome! 8-12" tall and 14-16" wide flat-topped plants are smothered in yellow and orange fruits held upright above the foliage.

**Sweet Potato Vine Sweet Caroline series** (Proven Winners) – Always a stand out in the gardens. Sweet Caroline Raven has consistently been our favorite of the dark sweet potato vine.