

Southern Gardening

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Award winning choices for Mississippi fall gardens

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The 2010 Mississippi Medallion Award Winners are Fireworks Gomphrena, Electric Lime Coleus, Purple Flash pepper and Gulf Coast muhly grass. Mississippi Medallion Award Winners are selected each year based on their ability to thrive in Mississippi's hot, humid summers and cool winters.



(top) Gulf coast muhly grass is covered with a pink cloud of wispy flower heads held high above the wiry foliage and the effect is amplified when planted in large masses.

(bottom) The combination planting of Purple Flash, Electric Lime coleus, and Fireworks gomphrena was one

This past weekend, I was at the Fall Flower and Garden Fest at the Mississippi State University Truck Crops Branch station in Crystal Springs. I was impressed by how great these 2010 Mississippi Medallion winners looked, despite the cooler temperatures.

Fireworks Gomphrena continues to be an outstanding garden performer in MSU trials. Throughout the summer until first frost, it is covered with hot pink, iridescent flowers. The flowers have bright yellow tips that are reminiscent of exploding fireworks. The flower production seems never ending. Provide this plant plenty of space, because it has the potential to be large: up to 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide.

Even though there are a lot of coleus plants to choose from, you really need to take a close look at Electric Lime Coleus. At 24 inches tall, the beautiful lime green foliage makes this plant thrive in full sun or shade. It is a durable plant that pairs well with mums in the fall garden.

Purple Flash pepper is one of the showiest ornamental peppers available. The purple and white variegated leaves are beautiful even at a distance. The bright purple flowers add appeal to this plant. The attractive fruit start out looking like dark purple "marbles" and then mature into a bright red color. There always seems to be a good mix of fruit in various colors.

Purple Flash will grow to 15 inches tall and 21 inches wide. Try combination planting with another Mississippi Medallion winner, Diamond Frost Euphorbia, for a dynamic garden duo.

When it is getting late in the year, the Gulf Coast muhly grass is just coming into its own. This Mississippi native was covered with a pink cloud of wispy flower heads held high above the wiry foliage. The effect is amplified when planted in large masses. By late summer, Gulf Coast muhly grass will grow to about 24 inches by 24 inches. Cut back to about 6 inches in late winter to allow room for the new season's growth.

of the most colorful displays at The Fall Flower and Garden Fest. (Photos by Gary Bachman)

One of the best planting beds in the entire Fall Flower and Garden Fest display was the combination planting of Purple Flash, Electric Lime coleus, and Fireworks gomphrena. This bed allowed these outstanding plants to really show off.

It is October, but we don't have to start thinking about next year in the garden just yet. There is still plenty of time to enjoy this year's beautiful flowering plants.