

Gardening

ADVICE

New Plants to Try and Evaluate

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By Carol Stocker

When I took stock of my garden last year, I made this list of annuals, both old and new, that put on a good show in my garden:

Archangel Angelonia provided continuous purple spikes without deadheading.

Superbenas are a new verbena hybrids from Proven Winners so tough they just kept blooming for me last year. My fave was Royale Peach Keen.

Old favorite State Fair were good deer-proof zinnias for cutting.

Superbells is a calibrachoa hybrid from Proven Winners that required no deadheading.

Patchwork is an easy new lavender impatiens that bloomed nonstop.

I had less luck with wave petunias, perhaps because they required pinching. They just petered out.

But Wasabi coleus was an excellent lime green color accent for shade.

Best of all was Cool Wave pansies in white, yellow and blue edged frost. I planted these in my yard last October. They stayed in flower all through the mild winter looking colorful but frozen and pathetic. But starting in late February, they started blooming their heads off and prompted startled compliments from visitors because of the early season. Plus they are really good looking in that yellow, white and pale blue color combination. They are still blooming now in May and it will be interesting to see how long they last. They are supposed to spread twice as far as regular pansies, 24-30 inches and be hardy to Zone 5. They are from the makers of Wave petunias and are really miracle plants.

This year I am planning to try:

Patchwork Impatiens, which have novelty patterns and colors for hanging baskets and mixed containers. They grow 12 by 12 inches.

Honey Crisp Coleus for foliage color in shade. I like most coleus but this one has a peek-a-boo red underside. It grows 24 inches by 24 inches.

Archangel Angelonia produced great big blooms. I am going to try the new Raspberry Improved this year, which spreads 12 inches by 12 inches.

Fiesta Double Impatiens. These look like mini roses for shade. The New White Improved has larger blooms that stand out above the foliage. It grows 12 inches by 12 inches.

New Shrubs:

I am trying out Strawberries & Cream this year, a dramatic red and white lace cap flower that is supposed to cover the whole bush all season long. So far I've had to cut it back for cold damage to the leaves, but I want to see how long it will continue to bloom and weather it survives winters here when planted outdoors. It is supposed to grow to two feet, which is nice and low. It takes partial shade.

Another hydrangea I am trying out is Double Delights Wedding Gown. It is still too small, after one year's growth, to report on performance.

Last year I planted Ligustrum Sunshine (*Ligustrum sinense*), which has foliage that turns bright golden all summer long. Another new shrub I am trying out is Glossy Abelia *Caprifoliaceae*, a hybrid between *A. chinensis* and *A. uniflora* developed in Italy. It's what I call "a Global Warming plant" - one that would not have been winter hardy here in the past but probably is now. It made it through last winter in my garden. Like butterfly bush, it will die back to the ground in a harsh winter and just regrow in the spring. Otherwise it will grow 3-6 feet tall.

New Perennials:

Among perennials, I tried a lot of heucheras and especially liked Big Top from Ball and Tiarella Candy Striper foam flower from Terra Nova, which has dark stippled stripes down each leaf lobe and pink flower buds that open into white flowers.

I also planted some *Actea Simplex* Black Negligee from Terra Nova but it is slow growing so it will take a couple of years to show off its purple tinted white flowers. But it did survive the winter and is much larger this spring.

I also like trying out the many new selection of echinacea. My problem with these in the past is that animals, particularly woodchucks, nibble them down.