

## CAROLINA GARDENS

### Zesty zinnias

Zinnias are among the easiest flowers to grow from seed, and they provide a quick reward. Plant them in full sun in fertile, well-drained soil and wait for a riot of color. Sow zinnia seeds in the ground after the last frost and after the ground has warmed, or transplant as seedlings. Several zinnia varieties were among the big winners in the 2010 All-America Selections annual trials. These varieties were deemed resistant to leaf spot and mildew, menaces that can spoil a garden party. The double-flowered 'Double Zahara Cherry' (deep pink color) and 'Double Zahara Fire' (blaze orange) bloom 8–10 weeks after sowing, reach about 12–14 inches tall, and spread about 12 inches. These have 2½-inch flowers, as does 'Zahara Starlight Rose', another top-rated zinnia. 'Starlight Rose' is the first bi-color pink-and-white variety. To see photos of these and winners from years past, visit [www.all-americaelections.org](http://www.all-americaelections.org). For sources of seed, visit [www.all-americaelections.org/Seed\\_Source.asp](http://www.all-americaelections.org/Seed_Source.asp).

### Turfgrass tips

- ▶ Identifying turfgrass disease is the first step in finding a treatment. For a handy, interactive diagnostic guide, visit [www.turfinfo.ncsu.edu/diseaseID/default.aspx](http://www.turfinfo.ncsu.edu/diseaseID/default.aspx).
- ▶ To identify and deal with turfgrass weeds, you first need to find out whether the weed is a broadleaf, rush, sedge or grass. For a comprehensive identification and diagnostics guide, visit [www.turfinfo.ncsu.edu/turfid/Interactive](http://www.turfinfo.ncsu.edu/turfid/Interactive).
- ▶ Before grass greens up in spring, mow slightly lower than normal if there are dead grass stems and other debris. But be careful not to scalp your lawn. After the first time, remove no more than one-third of the stems in a single mowing. This will keep lawns less susceptible to drought, heat, pests and disease. If the lawn has become overgrown, mow over a period of several days to return it to the desired height.

### Hort Shorts

- ▶ Edamame is a soybean grown for kitchen cuisine—the

pods are steamed, then shelled for their nutty-tasting seeds. They can be eaten as a snack or added to dishes. Edamame is similar to other bush beans in its needs and growth habit. Wait to sow in spring until soils have warmed to about 65 degrees F. Edamame is ready to harvest when the seeds are plump but before pods start to yellow. 'Midori Giant', 'Mojo Green' and 'Sunrise' are some varieties well suited to North Carolina.

- ▶ The rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*) is a large, easy-care shrub rose. Rugosas are sometimes called beach roses, an apt nickname since they are tough enough to withstand drought and salt spray. Beach roses tolerate poor soils and are winter-hardy throughout North Carolina. Rugosas are thorny, so they are useful as protective screens.

### Tomato lingo

When deciding what tomato varieties to plant in your garden, consider the various growth characteristics:

- ▶ **Indeterminate tomatoes** are the traditional tall, endlessly vining types that require stakes or other supports—these continue growing and producing fruit all season. Determinate tomatoes put out many side shoots (suckers) that some gardeners pinch out to produce a sturdier main stem and larger fruit.
- ▶ **Determinate tomatoes**, called bush types, are stockier and shorter-statured. They mature early and bear all their fruit over a brief period and then stop growing. Determinate varieties are popular with gardeners who have less space and are also favored by canners who want to harvest a large amount all at once. Don't prune these types or you will diminish your harvest.
- ▶ **Semi-determinate tomatoes** have characteristics of both determinate and indeterminate varieties. They bear all season but produce fewer suckers than indeterminate tomatoes and are typically more compact (about 5 feet tall). There are fewer commercial varieties in this category—'Celebrity' is sometimes referred to as semi-determinate. 📍



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*This disease-resistant zinnia variety won big in the 2010 All-America Selections annual trials—'Double Zahara Fire.'*