

SPECIAL YEAR-LONG PLANNING GUIDE

Chicagoland

THE MAGAZINE FOR OUR REGION

GARDENING

What You Need to Know

- 18 Flowering Shrubs
- 13 Best New Annuals
- How to Grow Green
- Veggie Timeline

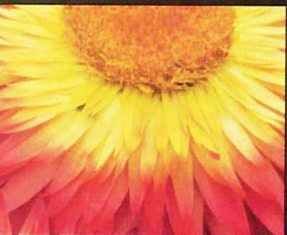
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Seasonal **INTEREST**



Try these colorful beauties to make your garden a showcase from early summer through fall.



Petunia 'Phantom'

By Jim Nau

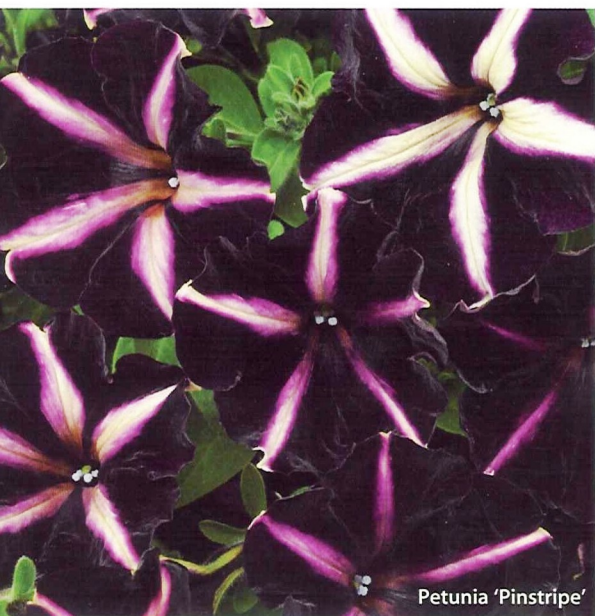
Jim Nau is the Manager of The Gardens at Ball Horticultural Company in West Chicago. Testing an average of 3000 varieties per year, the gardens are the showcase of the company's offering to growers, garden centers, and home gardeners.

I am redoing my backyard for 2011. Actually, I have to. Between the sump pump wars (I lost) and the changes in topography (somehow, I built a dam), the shade herbaceous garden turned into a swamp from spring through summer. I thought about changing it over to an aquatic garden except that this same area dries up in the heat of summer. So, with the addition of a new drain and tile (along with some severe pruning) my backyard is now morning sun and afternoon shade. Since I am starting anew, I spent part of my summer in the Gardens at Ball looking for a few gems to include. Here are a few for you to consider.

Petunia 'Phantom', 'Pinstripe' and 'Black Velvet'

The elusive black flower. Of all the colors, black is the least available in flowering plants. If you look at the top ten annuals in the market, black is the color that is lacking in the majority of crops.

Not so with petunias. Not one, but three selections are available to consider: 'Pinstripe' is a black and white striped variety; 'Phantom' is black and yellow striped; and 'Black Velvet' is a deep, velvet black flower color. All three grow from 8 to 12 inches tall and are best in mixed combination containers on the deck or patio.



Petunia 'Pinstripe'

Petunia 'Wave Purple Improved'

As if 'Wave Purple' couldn't get any better—it now flowers earlier. It still has the trailing habit with slightly larger flowers but has the same deep-magenta purple flower color that home gardeners are familiar with. Plants are 5 to 7 inches tall and spread 2 to 3 feet across.

However, if you liked the original, don't fret; it becomes 'Wave Purple Classic'.



Petunia 'Black Velvet'



Petunia 'Wave Purple Improved'



Zinnia 'Double Zahara Fire'

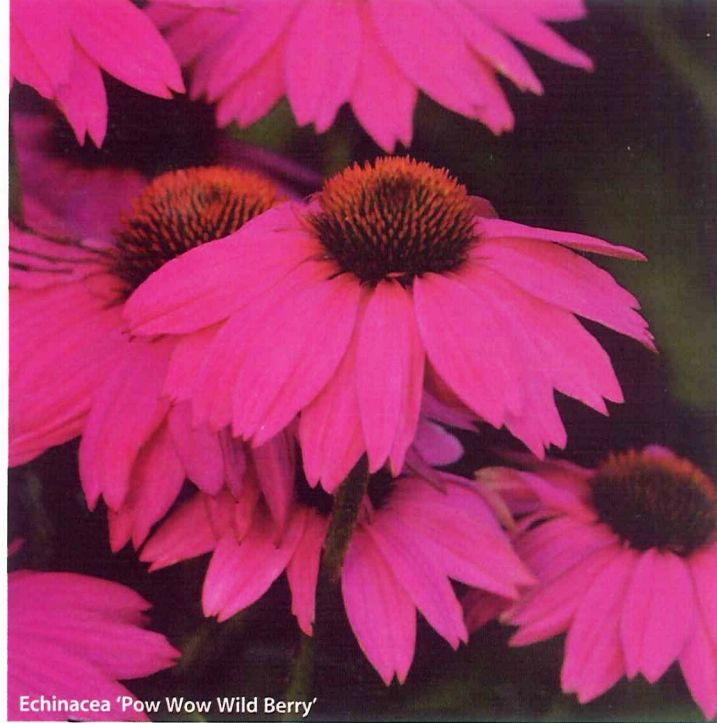


Zinnia 'Double Zahara Cherry'

Zinnia 'Double Zahara Fire' & 'Double Zahara Cherry'

Probably nothing more personifies summer than zinnias. They come in various heights, colors and flower types, and are among the easiest for the home gardener to grow. Add the All-America Selections award winning 'Double Zahara' to your list and you can't go wrong.

The Double Zahara series has fully double, 3-inch flowers available in 'Fire' (vivid scarlet orange) and 'Cherry' (deep cherry rose). Both were outstanding in the Gardens at Ball this past summer. Plants grow from 16 to 20 inches tall.



Echinacea 'Pow Wow Wild Berry'



Marigold 'Moonsong'

Echinacea 'Pow Wow Wild Berry'

Echinacea is one of the staples of North American native gardens and now boasts an additional honor. The latest variety, 'PowWow Wild Berry', has won the prestigious All-America Selections award. Richly appointed with a burgundy-rose flower color, the plants grow from 16 to 20 inches tall. This is one of the mid-height ranges that is perfect for the perennial border. There is a white-flowering counterpart, 'PowWow White', that is also available. Hardy to USDA zone 4.

Marigold 'Moonsong'

There have been a number of advancements in African marigolds and several have been discussed here in the past. Add to that list the variety 'Moonsong', another of the All-America Selections award winners.

'Moonsong' is a beautiful performer that received many accolades in the Gardens at Ball this past summer. It has deep orange, fully double blooms on plants growing from 18 to 20 inches tall.



Begonia 'Gryphon'

Begonia 'Gryphon'

While the highlight of the begonia 'Cocktail Tequila' is its flowers, the foliage makes 'Gryphon' unique. Deeply cut green leaves are dotted with silver (similar to an angelwing type), making 'Gryphon' a natural for the shade garden or in locations where it gets morning sun and afternoon shade. Height is based on the plant's age; those in the garden center in the spring will be around 4 inches tall and will grow between 12 and 16 inches tall that summer.

If brought into the house and grown as a houseplant, the plants are frequently taller. In addition, the plants may flower.

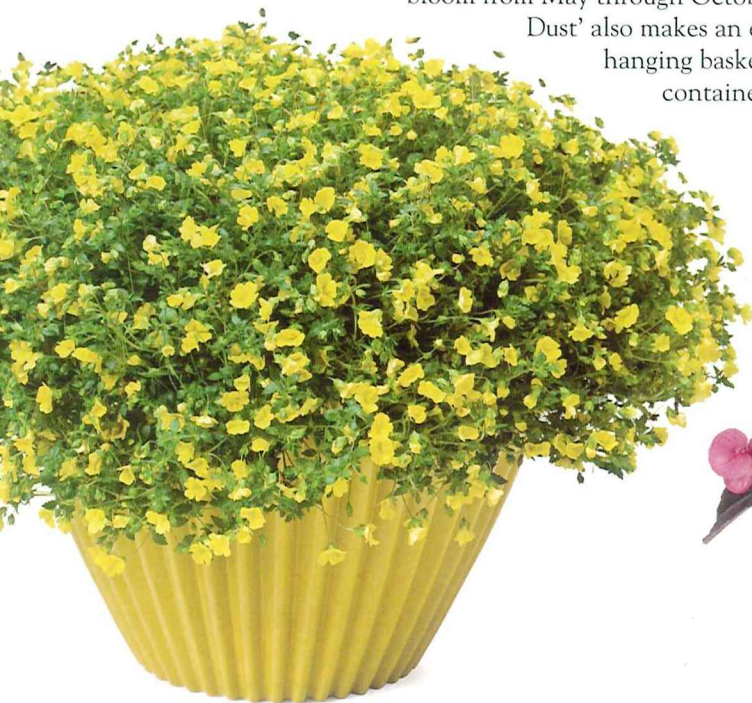
Begonia 'Cocktail Tequila'

The 'Cocktail' series of fibrous or wax begonias has been around for decades and well known colors include 'Vodka' (red flowered), 'Whisky' (white flowers), etc. 'Cocktail' caused a little controversy when it was first introduced—a number of people felt it promoted drinking and derided the association between a flower and alcohol.

Today, the series is the leading bronze-leaved begonia in North America. Joining the group is 'Tequila' with rich bronze foliage and a deep rose flower color. Plants are only 9 to 10 inches tall. 🌱

Mecardonia 'Gold Dust'

Looking for the perfect ground cover? 'Gold Dust' tops my list. Mecardonia is a low-growing plant from ½ to 1 inch tall and spreads from 14 to 16 inches across. The plants have bright yellow flowers that bloom from May through October. 'Gold Dust' also makes an excellent hanging basket and container plant.



Mecardonia 'Gold Dust'



Begonia 'Cocktail Tequila'