



# The ANNUAL REVIEW

Just as they review their yearly financial statement, many gardeners do a plant assessment as they consider their gardens for the following year. This is no different than the trialing we do at the Gardens at Ball Horticultural. We grow lots of new varieties, and the few that follow have been chosen from the broad range of annuals (plus one crossover perennial) that are available for the 2012 market.

BY JIM NAU



'Serena Waterfall Mix'



## Angelonia

Need a plant that prefers high heat, high humidity, full sun and tolerates dry periods as long as it is well-rooted? Try angelonia!

Angelonia will tolerate a wide range of soils as long as it gets the heat it needs to attain perfection. That is why early spring plantings will just sit and wait until the weather warms up (especially at night) before they start growing.

### 'Archangel Raspberry'

The 'Archangel' series is new and is available in a number of separate colors. Plants grow up to 14 inches tall. My personal preference is 'Archangel Raspberry' with rich, large raspberry-purple flowers on branching plants.

### 'Serena Waterfall Mix'

The Serena™ series has been on the market for a number of years and I appreciate its consistent performance and long blooming period. Joining the series is 'Waterfall Mix' which features blue and white selections growing from 14 to 16 inches tall.

## Begonia 'Whopper'

Big-leaved begonia plants have been available for decades. From seed, however, the market all but fizzled in the late 1980s. It seemed that gardeners wanted more traditional bedding or dwarf varieties instead of larger ones. The latest in this class is the 'Whopper' series, and it is the most vigorous of all the wax-leaved begonias. Available in both green and bronze-leaved selections, the 'Whopper' plants grow from 24 to 30 inches tall by summer's end and have shiny leaves with extended trusses of large 1½-inch flowers. My personal favorite is the 'Whopper Bronze Leaf Rose' although 'Bronze Leaf Red' is equally fine.







## Coleus 'Wasabi'

As you probably assumed, the name was chosen for its lime-green foliage. But watch out! This plant is vigorous. I was told it was 18 to 28 inches tall. It ended up being 3 to 4 feet tall and dominated all the other plants in the mixed containers. No matter. I just moved it to the flowerbed to be an accent at the back of the border. With a mix of tall blue salvias and yellow rudbeckias for companions, the bed was striking.

If you want to have a little fun, place 'Wasabi' in the middle or back of a flowerbed with vigorous, trailing petunias in front of it. Many petunia colors are available, but I prefer purple, lavender or blue.



## Gaillardia 'Arizona Apricot'

Okay, so this is the only variety in the listing that's a perennial (hardy to USDA zones 5-9). However, many of the newer selections of gaillardias being introduced can be used as either an annual or perennial since they flower more quickly than the older varieties. Another reason I included this one is that gaillardias come in a range of colors although yellows, reds and bicolors have dominated the palette. 'Arizona Apricot' is unique with its apricot petals highlighted at the tip with golden yellow. Flowers are 2 ½ to 3 inches across on plants up to 12 inches tall. Finally, it is also an All-America Selections (AAS) winner, which means it's a superior garden plant.



## Kale (Ornamental) 'Glamour Red'

This is another of the All-America Selection award winners. It's a wavy-leaved (not fringed or cut-leaf) plant growing from 10 to 12 inches tall with burgundy rose or red center leaves and deep green outer leaves.

Kale is a cool-season plant. If planted in our gardens in May, the plants stay green most of the summer and then color up in September for a bright display from fall into December. For this reason, gardeners purchase plants in the late summer for fall decoration with pumpkins and other seasonal accents.

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## BOOST Your Nutrition

One noteworthy development on the vegetable front is Burpee's introduction of six new vegetables with higher nutritional content than other varieties. Known as the BOOST collection, it is comprised of three cherry tomatoes, a pepper, a cucumber, and a salad mix.

- 'Cherry Punch' Hybrid Tomato delivers 30 percent more vitamin C and 40 percent more lycopene than the average garden tomato. A half-cup of Cherry Punch tomatoes delivers 90 percent of the recommended daily dose of vitamin C — 62 days to maturity.
- 'Cucumber 'Gold Standard' Hybrid Cucumber can produce five times the amount of beta carotene of other garden cucumbers and has a gold tone to the flesh — 49 days to maturity.
- 'Healing Hands' Lettuce Salad Mix can produce 20 percent more lutein, 30 percent more beta carotene, 30 percent more total carotenoids and 70 percent more anthocyanins than other garden salad blends — 28 days to maturity.
- 'Power Pops' Hybrid Tomato delivers 55 percent more lycopene and 40 percent more carotenoids than the average garden tomato — 57 days to maturity.
- 'Solar Power' Hybrid Tomato provides three times the level of beta carotene of the average garden tomato — 75 days to maturity.
- 'Sweet Heat' Hybrid Pepper is a habanero type that can produce 65 percent more vitamin C than the average garden pepper — 75 days to maturity.

*Editor's Note: The percentage figures cited above were based on test plants were grown under Burpee's trial conditions and harvested when ripe.*





## Ipomoea 'Sweet Caroline Raven'

Sweet potato vine is one of gardening's rare finds. A wonderful foliage plant, it works equally well as a ground cover or a mixed container plant, and it produces tubers (like a potato) during summer. Granted, eating the tuber doesn't even register in our consciousness. However, as the plant is growing during the summer, remember you do have another option once you have finished enjoying the foliage.

'Sweet Caroline Raven' is valued for its rich, dark black foliage that shines in a sunny location, and you might occasionally spy a light purple tubular flower as well. Plants grow from 12 to 16 inches tall but spread from 3 to 5 feet. Their spread depends on how happy they are with their growing environment. The richer the soil, the greater the spread. Watch for mice and voles. They love to feast on the tubers, especially in late summer as the tubers mature.

## Lantana

While considered a southern favorite for its love of high heat and humidity, lantanas do surprisingly well in Chicago-area gardens. While they don't like our cool spring nights, they will grow quickly once night temperatures warm up and if plants are grown in full sun locations.

### 'Lucky Lemon Glow'

I have written about other members of the 'Lucky' series over the years. They are a compact strain, growing from 12 to 16 inches tall, depending on the site. The warmer and richer the location, the taller they will grow.

While this one is named 'Lucky Lemon Glow', I often call it 'Eggs over Easy' as the summer progressed. The combination of yellow blooms in the center of the flower and white blossoms along the outside reminded me of a "sunny side up" breakfast. Just don't eat the blooms.

### 'Bandana Light Yellow'

'Bandana Light Yellow' has light yellow flowers that are consistently displayed across the entire blossom. Try Bandana in front of a bed of red salvia or coral and salmon echinaceas. Plants grow from 12 to 16 inches tall and also prefer sun and warmth.



'Bandana Light Yellow'

PHOTOS: RON CARRER





'Lucky Lemon Glow'





## Marigold 'Moonstruck Lemon Yellow'

Breeders of the African or American class of marigolds continue to add new introductions, making it one of the best annuals for the mid- and late-summer garden. The 'Moonstruck' series was introduced several years ago but 'Lemon Yellow' is new for 2012. As its name suggests, it has a lemon yellow flower color on plants growing from 14 to 16 inches tall. My personal preference has always been for these lighter yellow flowers rather than the traditional darker colors. I think they blend better in a mixed flower planting.

## Petunia 'Rhythm and Blues'

I admired petunia 'Rhythm and Blues' when I saw it several years ago as it was being developed in California. While I had seen a number of bicolor petunias over the years, I was impressed with the uniformity of the blue center blooms highlighted with a prominent white edge on each 2 ½ to 3-inch flower. Plants grow from 12 to 14 inches tall.

I used 'Rhythm and Blues' in mixed containers with the golden-leaved helichrysum 'Moonlight', the euphorbia 'Breathless White' and yellow daisies.





## Salvia 'Summer Jewel Red'

Another All-America Selections award winner, 'Summer Jewel Red' grows to 24 inches tall topped with 1-inch tubular red flowers on spikes that measure from 10 to 14 inches long. This is a wonderful plant to attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Long-flowering, the plants bloom from June well into September.



## Verbena 'Superbena Royale Peachy Keen'

I have to admit that it's the name that drew me in on this one. While the coral salmon flowers were massed across the crown of the plant within the hanging basket, the name of 'Peachy Keen' made me smile. I smiled a lot more when the plant excelled in its performance. Plants grow from 6 to 10 inches tall and can spread from 14 to 20 inches in either a container or garden beds. Use this one in a mixed combination with dark rose, blue, or yellow flowers. One of my personal favorites was pairing it with a yellow-flowering calibrachoa in a hanging basket.



## Viola 'Shangri-La Marina'

Growing from 6 to 8 inches tall, this variety has light blue outer petals with a dark blue center and a white border between the two (this is what defines the color "marina" in most catalogs). It is another of the All-America Selections award winners and can be used for either spring or late summer/autumn gardens. 🌸