

Home > Inside & Out: Home and Garden from The Plain Dealer > Home, Garden and Pets

Black plants, like an onyx-hued petunia, add intrigue, elegance to the garden

Published: Wednesday, March 16, 2011, 4:33 PM



By **Roxanne Washington**, The Plain Dealer

Follow

Like Be the first of your friends to like this. 5 [Share](#)

[Share](#) 8 [Email](#)

[Comment](#) 0 [Print](#)

You don't often hear about the dark side of gardening, but there is one.

Petunias crowned with onyx petals. Orchids festooned with purplish-brown foliage. Fritillaries that flirt with dark-purple shades.

Dark flowers and foliage live in the shadows of sunflowers, red roses and similarly colorful, potently popular botanicals. Dark gardening botanicals are numerous but, for the most part, are a curiosity.

Yet there are some who regard somber-shaded plants as beautiful and unique.

"I've never known a gardener who is blase about black," Larry Rettig writes on [Dave's Garden website](#). "That color in a flower has always intrigued some gardeners and repulsed others."

Rettig's article is in reference to 'Black Velvet,' a new petunia that's expected to get tons of attention this spring. 'Black Velvet' is described as a breeding breakthrough because it's the first of its kind.

Rettig writes: "When 'Black Velvet' bursts onto the garden scene in 2011, there are bound to be both accolades and brickbats. For the time being, the accolades have it by a long shot.

"Last summer, 'Black Velvet' was the star of the Greenhouse Grower's Association Evening of Excellence. It earned two awards that evening: Industry's Choice and Reader's Choice," he adds.

"It's the world's only black petunia, and everybody always wants to look at it closely to be sure [of the color]," says Bill Calkins, business manager of independent garden centers for Ball Horticultural Co., which introduced 'Black Velvet.' "This plant was bred for very many years to make it true black."

'Black Velvet' is true black, but when horticulturists and garden writers refer to plants as "black," they use the word as an umbrella term for the darkest plants in horticulture. Many have foliage and flowers that are deep tones of purple, red and bronze.



[Enlarge](#)

[Special to The Plain Dealer](#)

The Serpentine Night giant stream orchid is said to be one of the few orchids grown for its striking dark foliage rather than its exotic flowers. (Timber Press)

[Adding black plants to your garden gallery](#) (6 photos)



Sponsored By:
[Click here to learn more.](#)

TRI-C JAZZ FEST CLEVELAND

Tickets on Sale

More Inside & Out: Home and Garden from The Plain Dealer

Most Comments Most Recent

Inside & Out: Home and Garden from The Plain Dealer stories with the most comments in the last 7 days.

- 3** [Migrating song birds, waterfowl and raptors are awakening Northeast Ohio's woodlands and ponds: Aerial View](#)
- 2** [Every dog is unique, but they all inspire love: Ask Dog Lady](#)
- 2** [Daffodils of all varieties a sure sign of sunny days ahead](#)
- 1** [Pros and cons of replacing, restoring or relining your yucky bathtub](#)

TRI-C JAZZ FEST CLEVELAND

Tickets on Sale

Most Active Users What's this?

Users with the most [cleveland.com](#) comments in the last 7 days

- 251** [Hegel](#)
- 111** [boneybenny](#)
- 109** [mrclean](#)
- 74** [rpuck1](#)