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Columbia Star

Columbia's locally owned weekly newspaper since 1963

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Beauty in the Backyard

January 22, 2010

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Al I Ameriican Selectiions await green thumbs

Stopping to smell the flowers
By Arlene Marturano marturanoa@yahoo.com



Viola "Endurio Sky Blue Martien" blooms throughout the southern winter.

All American Selections (AAS) is an organization evaluating the growing performance of flower and vegetable seeds for home gardens. This year four flowers proved superior at trial gardens across the United States and Canada. Park Seed Trial Gardens in Hodges is the test garden for South Carolina.

Each of the 2010 hybrid plants is related to familiar garden favorites: gaillardia, snapdragon, viola, and zinnia.

Gaillardia

The sun-loving perennial Gaillardia x grandiflora "Mesa Yellow" is 18 inches tall with a single yellow flower three inches in diameter. The prolific long-season of flowers allows for cut bouquets as well as butterfly attractors. Plants are wind and rain tolerant. They adapt to small gardens and containers. Length of time from sowing until flowering is 120 days. Snapdragon

Antirrhinum majus "Twinny Peach" is a snapdragon without the snap. It is a double or butterfly flower form with peach, yellow, and orange tones. Like all snapdragons it is easy to grow and heat tolerant. The petite plant is 12 inches high and flower size is 1.25 inches. Abundant flower spikes permit cutting for indoor bouquets. Length of time from sowing until flowering is 70-84 days. Viola

The spreading and mounding annual Viola cornuta "Endurio Sky Blue Martien" is a tough performer in mild southern climates flowering throughout the winter. Sky blue flowers three-fourths of an inch across cover the plant. With a height of only six inches, they adapt well in window boxes, planters, containers, and hanging gardens. Length of time from sowing to flower is 63 days. Zinnia

The festive flower of the Zinnia marylandica "Zahara Starlight Rose" is heat and drought resistant and very easy to grow. The plant has been bred to be resistant to leaf spot and mildew. This resulted in long-lasting zinnia plants in the trials. Mature plants are 12-14 inches high with flower diameters of 2.5 inches. They make a dramatic appearance in garden beds, containers or patio urns. Cut them to dazzle the dining table. Length of time from sowing to flower is 61 days.

Seed for all of the AAS winners may be obtained from Park Seed at www.parkseed.com/



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