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Award-winning flowers sparkle with color

By **Larry A. Sagers**

For the Deseret News

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Looking for new flowers each year is a little bit like looking for rainbows.

As you see them bloom, they can be as spectacular as the multicolored arcs appearing in a summer thunderstorm.

Once again, I am indebted to the All America Selections Committee (AAS) and to the National Garden Bureau (NGB) for this year's award winners.

Their judges critically evaluate the hundreds of introductions to bring you the best.

Among this year's award winners is Echinacea purpurea "PowWow Wild Berry," a new introduction that shows how much plant breeders have improved this plant, which is native to the American prairies.

Echinacea purpurea "PowWow Wild Berry" tolerates both heat and drought, and it has few disease or insect problems, so consider that before adding them to your garden.

Another tough, water-wise plant is Gaillardia F1 "Mesa Yellow." It is the first hybrid blanket flower that has a controlled plant habit and prolific flowering. The 3-inch daisy-like flowers bloom throughout the summer and are relatively maintenance free.

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Marigold F1 Hybrid African "Moonsong Deep Orange" also got the nod from the judges, who noted the intense, deep-orange flower's fade-resistant color could not be captured by a picture or digital image.

One of the more significant improvements of this plant is the intense green foliage that covers the old blooms. The flower size ranges from 2½ to 3½ inches, and the plants are about 12 to 15 inches tall. They are also heat and drought resistant.

I was a little taken aback with this next name. Snapdragon F1 "Twinny Peach" gets its name because these snapdragons do not snap. This new flower form does not have the jaws or joints to snap, giving it a twin or double flower — hence the name "Twinny."

5 photos



Larry Sagers

"Zahara Starlight Rose" zinnias won an AAS award.

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Enjoy the pastel peach, yellow and light orange shades that are more wide ranging than any other snapdragon. It works well as a garden or cut flower.

Violas are best planted in the fall in our area so they will give a stunning spring display. Viola F1 "Endurio Sky Blue Martien" gets an AAS 2010 Cool Season award. It flowers well as a fall plant and again in spring after the snow melts.

For those who love to grow zinnias but have pretty much given up, there's good news. Three new AAS winners are zinnias, and they are all resistant to powdery mildew. They also have proven resistances to leaf spot, which is a less frequent but annoying problem in Utah. You can grow these without feeling like you have to keep your sprayer constantly at your side.

Zinnias are one of the easiest flowers to grow in our gardens. They will bloom from seed in about two months and are faster from transplants, and they bloom all season long.

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