



A GREENER VIEW- All-America Selections' 2010 Award Winners

Written by JEFF RUGG, Creators Syndicate

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One way I have found to pick the best plants for my garden is to look at the All-America winners for the new year. If it has been tested and approved in the All-America Selections (AAS) testing program, I can trust the plant to grow. They have almost 50 test gardens from Alaska and Canada to California and Florida. It is especially nice to have a test garden in a similar climate as your own landscape. They also have over 175 display gardens all across the continent; they are not used for judging, but instead to show you how the plants grow in your local area.

AAS trial gardens have tested around 50 plant varieties every year since 1932, and they only accept previously unsold varieties. There is an AAS Gold Medal Award reserved for a breeding breakthrough. Gold Medal Awards have been rare, only given once or twice a decade. The award recognizes a flower or vegetable for significant achievements, proven superior to all others on the market.

Each testing garden has at least one official AAS judge. The judge supervises the trial, but no judges are paid for their efforts. Typically, the judge is a horticultural professional and the site is part of a seed company trial grounds, university or other horticultural institution.

The judge evaluates entries by looking for desirable qualities, such as novel flower forms, flower colors, flower show above foliage, fragrance, length of flowering season, and disease or pest tolerances or resistance. Vegetables are judged by searching for such traits as earliness to harvest, total yield, fruit taste, fruit quality, ease of harvest, plant habit, disease and pest resistance.

The judges evaluate AAS trials all season long, not just an end-of-season harvest. Based on the superior qualities, the judge scores each entry. Only the entries with the highest nationwide average score are considered to be worthy of an AAS award.

When you see the red, white and blue logo of All-America Selections on vegetables and flower seed packets, bedding plant tags or in catalogs, it is a promise of gardening success. AAS has taken the guesswork out of finding reliable new flower and vegetable varieties that will show improvements over other varieties.

Last year, there were four winners: one flower and three veggies. This year had four winners, but they were all flowers.

I have been looking at Zahara zinnias for the past couple of summers, and I was pleased to see the "Zahara

GARDEN TIP

All-American Selections 2010

All-American Selections recently announced the 2010 award winners: The winners are based on categories such as tolerance to climate, diverse growing conditions and disease resistance.



Snapdragon F1 'Twinny Peach'
A great all season plant for gardens with full sun. Has ability to withstand a slight frost during winter, and has tolerance to heat and drought during summer months.
Flower Size: 1 1/4 inches
Flower Color: Pastel shades of peach, yellow and light orange



Zinnia 'Zahara Starlight Rose'
This low maintenance bicolor is proven resistant to leaf spot and mildew. With full sun, a mature plant can grow to a foot tall.
Flower Size: 2 1/2 inches
Width: 12-14 inches
Garden Spacing: 10-12 inches
Plant Height: 12-14 inches



Gaillardia F1 'Mesa Yellow'
Plant that proved to be a wind and rain resistant, low maintenance flower. Yellow flowers give it a bit more punch in the garden and attract butterflies.
Flower Size: 3 inches
Plant Height: 16-18 inches
Width: 20-22 inches



Viola F1 'Endurio Sky Blue Martien'
The pale blue flowers bloom from spring well into summer. Plant produces 3/4-inch sky-blue flowers that cover the plants.
Flower Form: Single
Plant Height: 6 inches
Width: 12 inches
Garden Spacing: 10-12 inches

Source: www.all-americanselections.org Creators.com/Bob Katz

Starlight Rose" zinnia on the winner's list. It has the typical zinnia flower shape, but the center is bright pink with white outer petal edges. It has proven to be resistant to leaf spot and mildew, which often kills zinnias, and it is heat and drought tolerant. Suitable for containers, these plants grow in full sun to 12 to 14 inches tall and wide.

I have never been real fond of snapdragons, but I may have to try the double flower form "Twinny Peach" with its blend of peach tone colors. "Twinny Peach" will produce abundant flower spikes, plenty to cut and place in vases for fresh indoor bouquets. It exhibited heat tolerance in the AAS trials and grows about 1 foot tall and wide.

Gaillardias are great sun-loving flowers that look like daisies. They often grow too tall and messy. "Mesa Yellow" has 3-inch flowers that can be cut for bouquets or left on the plants to attract butterflies. The neat, 22-inch plants are adaptable to small gardens or any type of container in full sun. When planted near the edge of the container, they will cascade down.

Violas or pansies are great winter bloomers for the warm or cool winter states. Planted in the fall, they will bloom all winter and spring until the summer heat gets them. In cold winter states, they will bloom in the fall, go dormant over the winter, and bloom again in the spring until the weather gets hot.

The new blue "Endurio Sky Blue Martien" will look great with yellow pansies or next spring's yellow crocus. This viola can also be planted in the spring. It will grow to 6 inches tall and 10-12 inches wide, creating a bright spot in any garden. It is also perfectly suited for window boxes and hanging gardens, as well as balcony and patio planters.

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