

They'll grow on you: A guide to what's hot for gardeners in 2011

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New black petunia



Unlike previous "black" varieties – which were really deep purple – Ball Horticulture's new petunia is a true, velvety black and looks beautiful when paired with other colors.
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These are among the most anxiously awaited new arrivals in greenhouses this spring.

We talked to area experts to see what varieties were already fueling pre-planting buzz in the gardening world.

The predicted best-sellers listed here come from Eric Baker of Baker Nursery, Fargo; Russell Emerson, a Fargo-based sales representative for Ball Horticultural; and Adam Volz with Sheyenne Gardens in West Fargo.

We have also included some of the All-America Selections' winners for 2011. The AAS promotes new garden seed varieties that show superior garden performances after being judged in impartial trials in North America.

- Ball Horticulture has introduced a trio of elegant black petunias, which may transform the ubiquitous flower's milk-maid reputation. The aptly named **Black Velvet** is a true, rich black, not a dark purple as found in past noir wannabes. The striking flower is like a handsome red carpet escort: It will make all flowers around it pop.

Ball has also gilded the lily a bit with **Phantom**, a black petunia with a striking yellow starburst, and **Pinstripe**, a little black number with tastefully thin, creamy stripes.

- Another showstopper is the **Pretty Much Picasso**, a vibrant purplish petunia edged in a brilliant chartreuse. "It has such a unique green edge to it that's it's one of those love or hate type things," Emerson says.
- The **Arizona Apricot** gaillardia, another AAS selection, combines lovely, daisy-like blooms with an apricot hue unique to its class. Blooms have yellow edges that deepen to a rich apricot in the center. The long-flowering perennial produces compact, 12-inch-tall plants with bright green foliage and a tidy growing habit. It is hardy in USDA Zones 2-10.
- Love raisins? Then you'll like **Tomaccio**, a sugary cherry tomato bred to dry in record time to an exceptionally sweet dried-fruit snack. The tomatoes will also add a sun-dried kick to gourmet pizzas, salads and pastas at home. First bred in Israel and introduced to the U.S. by C. Raker & Sons, the vining plant is still pretty pricey and rare. But once you find one, it can be grown on a well-lit deck or balcony and can produce up to 18 pounds of fruit in a season.
- The Endless Summer brand's **Bella Anna** hydrangea, produced by Bailey Nurseries in St. Paul, breaks the color barrier with its vibrant magenta-pink inflorescences. The plant is able to bloom on old and new wood and will produce flowers from summer until frost.

"That's their golden child this year," Baker says. (A hydrangea with similar colors, *Invincibelle Spirit*, will also be available.)

- **Glamour Red** ornamental kale features distinctive glossy leaves and a dramatic pink center. The waxless quality of this AAS winner's leaves gives them shine and a more intense, vivid color than what you'll find in existing ornamental brassicas. Flower head size is 10 to 12 inches.
- Burpee's well-loved **Fourth of July** tomato is available for the first time in plant form this year. "So many gardeners don't want to plant tomato seed ... but in the past, that was the only way to get it," says Emerson. This popular indeterminate plant, an improved version of the *Early Girl*, takes just 49 days to mature and produces flavorful, 4-ounce tomatoes till the frost hits.
- Bred by Seminis, the "**Orange Blaze**" sweet orange bell pepper is another AAS winner. It matures early, is much easier to grow than other colored peppers and produces a very sweet flavor. It also shows high resistance to diseases such as bacterial leaf spot and tobamovirus.
- The **Hijinks Pumpkin**, an AAS vegetable award winner, may be one of the best-looking ornamental pumpkins out there. Bred by Sakata Seed America Inc., this variety produces extremely uniform, 6- to 7-pound fruits. They boast smooth, deep-orange skin with

distinctive grooves, making them ideal for carving or display. Gardeners can expect high yields, excellent stem attachment and high resistance to powdery mildew.

- The **gryphon begonia**, a 2011 introduction with a mottled silver-green leaf, has been in hot demand at Sheyenne Gardens, Volz says. It is gaining points for its vigorous growth in shade; its huge, silvery leaves; and its tropical look.