

Not all has to be pretty in pink

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Honeysuckle is Pantone's selection for 2011 Color of the Year, but that doesn't mean the color is going to take over the gardening world. / Photo provided by Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp

Decorators, designers and manufacturers are painting the town honeysuckle, turning out home accessories, clothing, paint and other products in the pink color.

But what about the plant world? Will we see dozens of annuals and perennials in the 2011 color of the year, so named by Pantone, the arbiter of color standards?

Not likely, say plant-marketing pros.

"I don't think colors of the year have that much of an effect on perennials, as they are more long-term plantings," said Christine Kelleher, a marketing specialist with Blooms of Bressingham North America, a breeder of perennials.

It takes years, sometimes a decade or more, for new plant introductions to become commercially available, she said.

At Proven Winners, "we introduce the best-performing plants, regardless of color," said Marshall Dirks, director of marketing for the brand. "White flowering plants such as Diamond Frost, Snowflake bacopa and Snow Princess would not have a chance if we followed color trends. They are all in our top five total sales."

Katie Rotella, public-relations manager at Ball Horticulture Co., said that, in the plant world, "there's a move toward the 'unexpected' or unconventional in mixes and in combination plantings," rather than the introduction of color-specific plants. Among Ball's products are Simply Beautiful and Burpee brands.

"While we don't know what 2011 will bring, (in 2010) the favorite flower color changed from purple the last two years, to pink" among 1,300 consumers surveyed, said Dirks of Proven Winners.

"I believe a shift to 'comfort' colors, such as pink and blue, was evidence that the economy does affect one's color choices. The increase of white and the decrease of wild, bold, risky colors, such as red and orange, is reflected too," he said.

For the real thing, consider planting 'Goldflame' honeysuckle (*Lonicera x heckrottii*), a hardy, summer-flowering vine that has trendy pink, fragrant flowers with gold centers.

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