

## **My Favorite Things**

by Leslie Finical Halleck



*Petunia 'Black Velvet'. Photo by Leslie Finical Halleck.*

### **Black as Velvet**

Anyone who knows me, and how I choose colors for my garden, knows that the new series of black petunias will be right up my alley. One of my employees, Christine, likes to call my color palette "the bruise garden." Dark purples, blues and chartreuse greens dominate my landscape. So when I first saw these stunning black petunias at the trade shows last year, I knew they would be a must-have for me and my bruise garden.

'Black Velvet' is the world's first solid black petunia. I was instantly drawn to its deep purple-black glossy blooms, over which you can't help but ooh and ahh. The upright, mounded plants are early to flower and have a tightly branched growth habit. 'Black Velvet' will grow to about 12 inches tall and wide and is a good continual bloomer through spring. It is beautiful in containers mixed with other early color plants such as nemesia, bacopa, Iceland poppies, geraniums, dusty miller and even salad greens and cool-season herbs. Silver foliage plants such as cardoon and dusty miller are the perfect backdrop for 'Black Velvet'.

Next in the series is 'Phantom', which sports a deep black base color with a bright yellow star pattern. The contrast is unusual and eye-catching and makes this petunia the perfect companion for foliage plants like purple fountain grass, purple sweet potato vine and euphorbia. Mix in some trailing *Lysimachia* 'Goldilocks ' for a sophisticated container planting. Plants are also dense and compact, growing to 12 inches tall and wide.

If you like the look of black petunias but want something a little softer, be sure to check out Petunia 'Pinstripe'. The not-quite black, dark purple blooms with a cream colored star pattern are lovely, and can be mixed with a pastel palette of whites and pinks. Pair with alyssum, white nemesia and other pink petunias for a lush spring combination. Growth habit is the same as 'Black Velvet' and 'Phantom'.

All petunias should be planted in a sunny location with good drainage. Plants will tolerate a bit of afternoon shade, but for the best blooms, keep it sunny. Upright petunias are well suited to growing in containers and do best when fertilized through spring with a liquid or granular fertilizer formulated for blooming color. If you plant them in the ground, make sure you have amended, well-draining soil for best performance. Enjoy these striking new beauties now through spring until the onset of strong summer heat.