

Angelonias sizzle in the summer landscape



HANDOUT - MCT

This mix of Serena angelonias created by a commercial landscaper mimics motion that is almost wave-like.

BY NORMAN WINTER - MCCLATCHY-TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

If you're looking for a spiky bloom to create interest and excitement in the garden, look to the Serena angelonia. Also known as summer snapdragon, this beauty is becoming more popular every year, with the introduction of new varieties and new colors. Commercial landscapers and savvy gardeners are creating new and dazzling combinations from the flower border to the mixed container.

Pan American Seed's Serena series has not only been sweeping awards but now they are showing innovation with mixes. Landscapers are using these new mixes and creating their own by using four or five of one color – like blue next to a clump of white, pink, purple and lavender, repeating the design throughout the planting. From a distance, it looks random but not quite as informal as a true seed mix. Mixing also creates a sense of motion that is almost wave-like.

The Serena series, the first seed-produced angelonia to hit the market, generally tops out at around 20 inches. New in the market will be the Serenita, which will be in the 12-to-15-inch range.

These are tough plants, and though they may have the nickname summer snapdragon, they are from Mexico and the West Indies and can take our torrid summers. Since they are so heat-and drought-tolerant, you will want to plant them in mass with other solid performers like melampodium, Profusion zinnias, Titan periwinkles or rudbeckias. One of the most beautiful plantings I have recently seen combined blue angelonia blossoms with hot pink petunias. This spiky texture is most welcome in a garden dominated by round flowers.

Select a site in full sun for best blooming. Before you plant, incorporate 2 to 3 inches of organic matter into the soil. While preparing the bed, take the opportunity to mix 2 pounds of a slow-release fertilizer with a 2-1-2 ratio. After planting, complete your project by adding a good layer of mulch.

Serena angelonias are terrific low-maintenance, worry-free plants. They will work superbly in a cottage garden but will also look at home next to bananas or elephant ears in a tropical-style garden.

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