

Now comes a 'wave' of cool pansies

Seventeen years ago, the first Wave petunia burst on the scene as an All-America Selections award winner for 1995. Purple Wave was hailed at the time as unlike any petunia ever seen, with a low, spreading habit that could carpet the ground with color.

Since then, Wave petunias in an array of colors have become mainstays in large containers and as ground covers.

Now the Wave family has expanded to include pansies; see www.wave-rave.com.

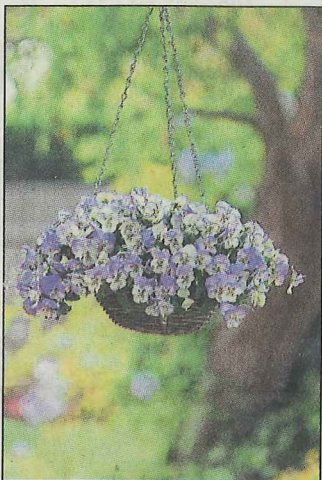
Cool Wave pansies have a low, spreading habit reminiscent of that first Wave petunia. The new pansies look great tumbling over the edge of baskets and planters. Like Wave petunias, Cool Wave pansies also make colorful ground covers, with a single plant spreading 2 feet across.

Like other pansies, Cool Wave plants are ideal for reliable color in spring and fall when the weather is cool. So far, the series comes in yellow, pure white, white with blue edges and white with violet, plus a mix. The blossoms are considered mid-sized for a pansy.

Cool Wave pansies are said to possess superior winter hardiness. Although this milder-than-usual winter didn't put my plants to a harsh test, I can report that the Cool Wave pansies I planted in shallow containers last autumn managed to survive the winter in fine shape. That makes me think that, had I planted them in the ground, they would probably have survived even if the winter had brought much colder temperatures.

Spreading pansies are not entirely new, but Cool Wave pansies are extremely well-branched and are reportedly the most prostrate variety on the market.

The new pansies should be available wherever Wave petunias are sold. Expect to pay more for these spread-



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A spreading habit makes Cool Wave pansies an ideal candidate for a hanging basket.

ing pansies than for most other varieties. If you want to save money, you can grow Cool Wave plants from seed. It is, of course, much too late to start seed for this spring's pansies, but you could plan ahead for fall. Pansy seed requires darkness to sprout and a 10- to 12-week head start before transplant time.

Of all the cold-tolerant annuals, pansies are by far the best known. But there are other good choices, too.

Stocks, snapdragons and China pinks (*Dianthus*) are some old-fashioned favorites you can plant outside long before it's warm enough for impatiens or zinnias.

Some newcomers that are earning respect for their cold tolerance include *discia* and *nemesia*. Members of the snapdragon family, both have tubular flowers.

Cape daisies (*Osteospermum*) boast big, daisy-like flowers in bright colors. Many annual grasses and grass-like sedges and rushes make good companions in cold-weather combos.

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