

Pansy 'PlentiFall' series



Finally, a fall- and winter-blooming annual that cascades!

Jimmy Turner

At a glance

- Latin name:** *Viola x hybrida* 'PlentiFall' series
Common name: 'PlentiFall' trailing pansy
Flowers: 1½-2" across in three colors and two mixes
Mature size: 6-8" tall by 18-24" spread
Spacing: 12"
Hardiness: Cool season annual, hardy to Zone 5
Soil: Standard garden preparation
Exposure: Full sun to light shade
Water usage: Average
Sources: Local retail nurseries

The 'Lavender Blue' variety of 'PlentiFall' features bright plum-purple petals on top, lavender blue lower petals and a dot of yellow in the center.

Every fall, when I plant my winter-through-spring color, I'm perplexed as to what annual to use to replace the trailing plants in my hanging baskets, window boxes and containers. All the easy choices like lobelia, nemesia, and calibrachoa are great in spring, but they just aren't cold hardy enough to survive the winter in my part of Texas (DFW). The few other choices, like dianthus, snapdragon, kale and poppies, don't trail at all. Sooner or later, I always fall back on the undisputed ruler of cool-season gardens in Texas — the pansy or viola. Yet, I've just never been satisfied with the way they perform in hanging baskets or pots. They flower, but they don't really trail over the edge. I want something that spreads, falls, fills and spills over the edge like kudzu. And I want color! Lots of it all winter and spring long. OK, I know I'm asking for the impossible, but somewhere there has to be just the right plant.

Three years ago I found what I was looking for — the 'PlentiFall' pansy. I walked into the greenhouses of the PanAmerican Seed Co. in California and there it was, cascading from baskets, spilling over the edges of pots, and covered in blossoms. Needless to say, I wanted it. Badly. Unfortunately, they told me it wasn't available commercially yet. Well, as some of you may know, patience isn't one of my talents, but persistence is. I begged, wheedled, cajoled and poured on all of my Southern charm until they let me test 'PlentiFall' pansy in the Dallas Arboretum's super-secret hidden trial area. 'PlentiFall' pansies performed just as well as I had hoped and as well as the breeder promised. I have been able to enjoy 'PlentiFall' pansies for the last couple of years behind the scenes of the Dallas Arboretum, but this fall they have finally been released for everyone to enjoy.

'PlentiFall' pansy is the first seed-grown spreading pansy on the market — 1½ to 2-inch flowers cover plants that spread out

When 'PlentiFall' reaches the edge of a hanging container or basket, it cascades straight toward the ground.



'PlentiFall' blooms generously, and it recovers and begins to flower immediately after cold snaps.

18 to 24 inches across. This pansy really does grow flat to the ground, and when it reaches the edge of a container or bed, it spreads right over the edge, hanging straight down — perfect for hanging baskets and window boxes. And 'PlentiFall' doesn't stop flowering in the center of the plant — no "male pattern baldness" on this plant.

I don't know of any other cool-season annual that flowers this heavily and has the winter hardiness of this variety. Its extra vigor really shows after severe cold; it pops right back and begins to flower immediately. Currently, 'PlentiFall' pansy comes in three colors and two mixes. 'Purple Wing' has bright plum-purple petals on top, white lower petals with purple whiskers, and a dot of yellow in the center. 'Lavender Blue' has the same bright purple top with lower petals of lavender blue. 'White' is self explanatory, with white flowers that have just a hint of lavender whiskers. The 'Blueberry mix' has all three colors, and regular 'Mix' has an additional color, 'Yellow', which will be available next year as a straight color.

When shopping for 'PlentiFall' this fall, don't look for it in the six-pack and 4-inch sizes. This vigorous pansy will most likely be available only in 5-inch and larger pots. As I do with all pansies, I recommend full sun and regular fertilization for best flower production. I hope your garden will have plenty of 'PlentiFall' pansies this year. I know that my garden and the Dallas Arboretum will be overflowing with them! ★

About the author: Jimmy Turner is senior director of gardens at the Dallas Arboretum and a contributing editor to this publication. Visit www.dallasplanttrials.org for more information on his trials.

november/december 2010

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