



Black, Blue and Bi-colored: Exciting New Flowers Coming to Garden Centers in 2011

by Doreen G. Howard
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I'm able to trial **the new flowers and plants** a year or two before they come to the market. A few I've grown recently are stunners and will be in **garden centers in 2011!**

In the spirit of full disclosure, plant producers send me their introductions to grow, hoping that I'll write and speak about them. However, I'm a tough sell. My climate is severe, prone to late freezes and summer drought, plus the growing season is short, 100 days if we're lucky. I've grown so many flowers and vegetables that it takes an exceptional plant to impress me.

Two [petunias](#) took my breath away. 'Pretty Much Picasso' is a neon pink bloom edged with lime green. It trails naturally and doesn't need pinching to branch. Plants quickly fill a container or hanging basket with traffic-stopping color. The bi-colored petunia has been available for the previous two seasons, but distribution will be much more widespread this spring. It will be everywhere!



'Black Velvet' petunia is another attention-grabber. Black is an elusive color in the plant world. Yes, there are black hollyhocks and other flowers, but they have a purplish cast that is not true black. It took four years of breeding to finally eliminate the purple. 'Black Velvet' is genuinely black and stunning. It's an upright, compact plant about eight inches high and best for edging a flower bed or planted in smaller containers. Try the charcoal-black flower with white, red or orange blooms. A black-orange combo would be terrific for Halloween.



'Blue Mystique' orchid is already in stores. Photo courtesy of Silver Vase.

True blue is another elusive color in the flower world. Yes, there are primrose and pansies that are blue, but they have undertones of other colors, usually purple again. 'Blue Mystique', a phalaenopsis, is truly blue. The show-stopper orchid premiered in January and was the star of the world's largest plant show, IPM Essen, in Dusseldorf, Germany. Plants are now arriving at local garden centers and florists.

This primal blue color sadly wasn't bred; flowers are dyed. When flower stalks start to appear, growers inject a blue dye into plant roots. Buds and flowers are an intense blue. Subsequent flowers from the plant revert to white, without dye injections.



'Blue Zebra' primrose is one we may see in stores within a year or two. Photo courtesy of Dr. Rick Shoellhorn.

Several true blue primrose were at Essen, too, according to Dr. Rick Schoellhorn, director of new plant development at Proven Winners. They were bred to be blue and will not revert. He says American gardeners will probably see these plants in 2012.

What do you think of these gorgeous new flowers? Please share your thoughts—and what you'll be growing in the garden this year. Just post your comments (or questions) below!

<http://www.almanac.com/blog/gardening-blog/black-blue-and-bi-colored-exciting-new-flowers-coming-garden-centers-2011>