

All-America Selections

Plants have to meet two of seven criteria to be designated winners



AAS Flower Award Winner Mesa Yellow

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2010 ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS

Nine new winners

Eight flowers, one vegetable

Flowers

Gaillardia F1 Mesa Yellow

Echinacea purpurea PowWow Wild Berry

Marigold F1 Hybrid African Moonsong Deep Orange

Viola F1 Endurio Sky Blue Martien

Snapdragon F1 Twinny Peach

Zinnia Zahara ...

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Zinnia Zahara Starlight Rose

Zinnia Double Zahara Fire

Zinnia Double Zahara Cherry

Vegetable

Watermelon F1 Hybrid Shiny Boy

www.all-americaelections.org

In the world of sports, which many of us have been following the last several weeks, the designation of a player as an MVP, All American or Hall of Famer indicates that the player is outstanding in his sport. In the plant world, seeds or new cultivars, which outstandingly pass the test, can receive All-America Selections (AAS) status, as well.

History Of Aas

In 1932, W. Ray Hastings, president of the Southern Seedman's Association of Atlanta, suggested the designation of All-America Selections with seed companies establishing trial grounds and cooperatively testing new varieties. The data collected from these trials would be helpful for the general public. The program was a success, and today, the trial grounds include side-by-side comparison trials supervised by a judge, who is responsible for the growing and methodical evaluation of the flowers, fruits or vegetables. Only new and previously unsold varieties are accepted.

Almost since inception, AAS (www.all-americaelections.org/) has been selecting six to eight plants or vegetables as yearly All America Selections. As a result, AAS, governed by a Board of Directors with four officers and six directors, is respected in the horticultural world today as an innovator in developing new seeds for flowers and vegetables. Its mission is to promote new garden seed varieties with superior garden performance, judged in impartial trials in North America.

AAS 2010 WINNERS - Flower, Bedding Plant or Cool Season

The 2010 AAS winners are really top notch. Besides the Vegetable Award Winner watermelon F1 hybrid Shiny Boy, eight flower, bedding plant or cool season plant winners for 2010 are recognized.

Mesa Yellow, produced by Pan American Seed Company (www.panamseed.com/) is the first hybrid blanket flower, which can be cut for casual bouquets. It is a prolific bloomer with 3-inch yellow, daisy-like flowers. This F1 hybrid gaillardia is the first from seed and does not get tall, loose and floppy. The plant, attractive to butterflies, will grow 16- to 18-inches tall and 20- to 22-inches wide, with a spring growing season of 120 days from seed to plant. Use this plant in either full sun in the garden or in containers where it can cascade down. They perform great in small-space gardens and prove to be wind and rain resistant.

A purple coneflower, Echinacea purpurea PowWow Wild Berry, also bred by Pan American Seed Company, produces deep rose-purple 1- to 4-inch flowers that retain color on the plant longer. Due to its basal branching habit, more flowers per plant are produced by this sun lover, which does not need deadheading. This AAS Winner flowers approximately 20 weeks after sowing with transplanting to larger containers within 20 to 28 days. Even non-gardeners love this plant, as it thrives with few disease or insect problems.

Another easy flower to grow is the snapdragon. Designated All-America Selection Twinny Peach lost its snap, because it is the first double butterfly flower form that does not have the joints to snap. Submitted to the trials by HEM Genetics as an F1 hybrid, the blend of peach tone colors ranging from peach to yellow, to light orange, is another unusual quality of this heat tolerant snap. Try this tall and slender plant, 11.75 by 7.75 inches, in your garden beside salvia farinacea or other purple flower plants. Twinny Peach will produce many flower spikes to be enjoyed inside throughout the long growing season.

Cool Season Winner

For the cooler season in the Coastal Bend this year, try Endurio Sky Blue Martien, an F1 hybrid viola bred by Syngenta Flowers Inc., which greets the gardener with bursts of clear blue as it spreads and mounds throughout the flowerbed. It flowers throughout the winter, whether wind, rain, cold temperatures or snowfalls come its way. The plants grow to 6 inches in height and 10- to 12-inches wide, thus making it perfect for use in window boxes, hanging pots or planters on your patio. This viola takes only nine weeks from seed to your garden, so get these started now for blue beauty this spring.

Good Bloomers, Little Care

The misnamed marigold African Moonson Deep Orange is a fade-resistant 2- to 3-inch flower growing 12- to 15-inches tall, tolerating heat and drought - true Texas weather. Another F1 hybrid, this marigold is a sun lover, too. Although it has the marigold aroma, which some do not like, this marigold does not need to be deadheaded in order to continue blooming.

Three zinnias were distinguished as AAS winners: Double Zahara Cherry, Double Zahara Fire, and Zahara Starlight Rose, the latter being a combination of new and old in the zinnia family. This plant's new bi-color of rose and white flowers for this sun-loving class of annuals makes it one of the easiest annuals to grow. Through the trials, Starlight Rose showed proven resistance to leaf spot and mildew resulting in long lasting zinnia plants providing generous color all season. As it is heat- and drought-tolerant with its mature plants mid-sized, 12- to 14-inches tall and wide, this zinnia can be used in containers or in the garden.

Double Zahara Cherry is resistant to both leaf spot and mildew diseases, which encourages all growers to produce these plants without fear of loss. Recommended for 4-inch pots or larger, it produces double 2-inch blooms and matures at 12-inches tall. Try this plant in larger containers, which get full sun. This zinnia partners well with Double Zahara Fire, as they both bloom profusely all season long.

They Pass the Test

All of these plants from throughout the U.S. meet at least two of the seven criteria in being designated AAS winner, whether it be because of its earliness to bloom or harvest, disease or pest tolerance, unique colors of flowers, novel flower forms, total yield, length of flowering and overall performance. Each of these plants will be a winner for either the novice or the experienced gardener. When planning your garden this year, try at least one of these All-America Selections.

The Gardeners' Dirt is written by members of the Victoria County Master Gardener Association, an educational outreach of Texas AgriLife Extension - Victoria County. Mail your questions in care of the Advocate, P.O. Box 1518, Victoria, TX 77901; or vcmga@vicad.com, or comment on this column at www.VictoriaAdvocate.com.