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Dirty, Dirty II—In which we get a preview of coming attractions at Home Depot garden centers

Posted Apr 25, 2010 at 10:28 PM  
Updated Apr 26, 2010 at 12:40 AM



What plants will we see at Home Depot in the coming weeks? And what will we never see there?

Kim and I know—along with about 85 Dirty flower expeditioners ... Oh, and Farmer Rick Brown, proprietor of [Riverview Flower Farms](#), which supplies Florida's 144 Home Depots with annuals and perennials.

On our second Dirty tour of his sprawling factory-farm, he gave us the low-down on his favorite plants for

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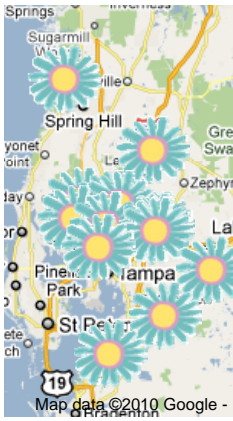
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We dug through our archives and asked nurseries for info to build this growing guide.

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**Kim's a Want It Now (WIN):**  
Everything pretty, everything now.

**Penny's a Nurture And Hold (NAH):** Nah, I won't pull that out yet, it's still got a green shoot.

**Kim** will resort to full-spectrum insecticides in desperate situations, and believes it's her duty and right to buy new plants every weekend.

**Penny** likes dragonflies, lady bugs and new stuff only after weeding, pruning and fertilizing.

**Both** advocate Plant Choice (SOMething besides crotons. Please!), lots of color and low maintenance.

**We** don't agree on everything, but we're smart enough to learn from each other - and from you.

planting now—favorites because he watches them winter, spring, summer and fall before he decides whether to send them out to the stores. If they don't offer up a lot of color and show some gumption through the tough times, they'll never see a store shelf.

The photo at top is an [osteospermum](#)—also called African daisy. It's in the trials area at the farm, where new plants get a long (or for really bad ones, a very short) look-see. This one may look pretty, but Rick said he wouldn't put it in his own garden.

"Voltage osteospermum is the only one I would grow," he said.

He showed us Voltage, which looks the same but is only available in yellow. It blooms earlier and longer than any other African daisy, and has flexible stems that don't break easily.

Another you won't see—these hollyhocks, which just didn't hold up in the heat.



Instead, he recommends Vietnamese hollyhocks, which he has in his own garden. They bloom on and off year-round, and took the winter freezes well. They're not at Home Depot, but [Manny's On the Bay](#) in Tampa had them recently for \$7, and [Kerby's](#) in Thonotosassa had them for \$10. (If you want seeds, email me your address and I'll mail you some, since I forgot to bring them to the post-tour seeds/cuttings swap.)

Winners? Rick has more than a few.

Littletonia 'Blue Vein', a new color in the small-blossomed Rays series of petunias (they're very disease resistant and heat tolerant) is a predicted winner for the fall. He also likes a "really tough" begonia, Griffin, for shade.

Available now are three new colors in the fairly new portulaca series called [Pazazz](#). It has brighter colored blooms that stay open much longer than other varieties (I experimented—it's true!).

The new colors were so bright, I had a hard time getting a good picture.



Rick—and those of us who follow his [blog](#)—are huge fans of '[Hallmark](#)' [bulbine](#). It requires nowhere near the copious amounts of water to establish, is very drought-tolerant, and, for many people, took the freezes well. The flowers get 14-18" tall and the plant can get about 2 feet across.

There's a yellow bulbine available, but this one, with orange and yellow flowers, is improved, Rick told us. "This is the best."

I really liked how our Dirty selves fell right into row formation, just like the bulbines. People imitating plants!



My favorite (I've been waiting almost a year for this one to graduate Rick's trials!) is [Hawaiian portulaca](#). This succulent is brand new to the market. It comes from the dry side of Hawaii, Rick said, so you have to be careful not to let it get too wet. It gets about 12-16 inches tall and produces a beautiful yellow flower. After it flowers, pinch it back.

About 500 have gone out to stores, and all of these are heading out any day now. Our Dirty field-trippers were really interested in these. (See them studying the little plants? Are they wondering how to fit them in their pockets? Never!!)



Here's what Hawaiian portulaca looks like in flower. (This photo is from last June.)



Other plants to watch for now are the ornamental [sweet potato vines](#). There has been an explosion of varieties of these great ground covers in the past two years, Rick says, but he sells only one: Bright Ideas. It's all you'll find at Home Depot. They don't take over your yard like others, and they branch without pinching. They're available in chartreuse, rusty red, and black.

Many, many thanks to Farmer Rick for giving us his Sunday morning, SO much information, and a lot of laughs! He also sent everyone home with plants from the trials. He really does value the opinions of us regular gardeners, and he's hoping everyone will report back on how their plants fared. (If you're not comfortable posting comments on a blog, shoot him an email at [growers@floridafriendlyplants.com](mailto:growers@floridafriendlyplants.com).)

It really was wonderful to meet (and, for some, meet again) the nicest group of gardeners on the planet. I'm absolutely sure about that. To a person—even 14-year-old Ian, who I'm sure would've preferred this sunny Sunday on a beach—everyone was cheerful and friendly, even when the clouds drifted away and we got a good preview of the summer ahead.

And here I have to give a shout-out to John and Bob, two guys who live in St. Augustine and drive to Sebring regularly, but come to Tampa to get the Sunday Tribune. They planned their month around getting to the Dirty tour. Those of us who stuck around for a cuttings/seed swap afterward were thrilled to get the *native Florida* tomato plants they brought. Mine has little tomatoes already!

[Send Us Your Comments](#)

Posted by **Ilvumpumpkins**, on 04/26 at 09:05 PM

Penny, I only took 3 Hollyhocks and I have grow this type before, so I know the out come all ready.

I wish now I had gotten different plants so I could report back to Rick, my garden mentor took a yellow plant that I will keep an eye on but I do not know the name of it. Like the kids say My bad. Pumpkin

Posted by **Penny L. Carnathan**, on 04/26 at 08:12 PM

Rick mentioned the pot-in-pot planting method in a comment below. I was going to include his demonstration in this post, but it was getting too long! There are photos if you click on the gallery at the top of the blog here, or better yet, hop over to Rick's blog ([www.floridafriendlyplants.com](http://www.floridafriendlyplants.com)). He has videos of doing this in the ground and in a container.

Janna has pot-in-pot in a bed along the walkway to the front door, where she like to have holiday- and season-appropriate flowers. It looks terrific! (She just has to remind her husband, who rules the front beds—and quite well—to cover the edges of the pots with a camouflaging mulch.)

Pumpkin, what Rick trials did you get?

Posted by **Ilvumpumpkins**, on 04/26 at 07:18 PM

What a wonderful way to spend a Sunday morning, at a farm that grows Florid Friendly Plants. Rick and Riverview Farms did it again and kicked it up a notch. Everyone had a great time and the wow factor on the tables of plants Rick let up pick from. Thank you Riverview Farms. Pumpkin

Posted by **Penny L. Carnathan**, on 04/26 at 01:33 PM

I had some in a pot outside a year or so ago. It got watered with rain about half the time and hose half the time and really did well for several months. (I didn't know about the tap water issue. Just got lucky, I guess.)

Posted by **Susan Gillespie**, on 04/26 at 12:48 PM

I must have missed the part about watering from the tap (and the name of the plant too—what was I doing?) From the research it doesn't like to be dry so what do you water it with if it isn't raining? I think I'll put the Calibrachoa in a pot to cascade instead of taking a chance on putting it in the ground for hit and miss watering. I don't want to be a slave to the hose.

Posted by **Penny L. Carnathan**, on 04/26 at 11:08 AM

Wouldn't it be great if one of Rick's trials made it to market because so many of y'all loved it? I'll cross my fingers. (I didn't take home any trial plants, since everything I put in the ground is a trial!)

I, too, was curious about the little petunia-looking plants people took to trial. Those are actually the Calibrachoa, right? The ones you want to avoid watering with tap water?

Funny how Kay's idea has taken off. I'm using the plastic-ware plant markers, too

Posted by **Chip**, on 04/26 at 10:32 AM

Diane and I had a lot of fun Sunday It is nice to get together with all of my dirty friends! We are making room for all the new plants we got on the tour Thank you every one! It isn't often we find a type of tomato that Diane or I have never heard of so thank you John and Bob for making the trip all the way from St Augustine. And now thanks to Rick pink hill will get a little pinker I am not sure when or if pink hill will be deemed pink enough It can be seen from space now but not pink enough! ...“Chip”

Posted by **RickBrown**, on 04/26 at 08:32 AM

We made a video of the Pot-in-Pot container idea.

<http://www.floridafriendlyplants.com/Blog/post/2010/03/23/Time-for-a-Little-Pot-in-Pot-Creativity.aspx>

Posted by **Susan Gillespie**, on 04/26 at 08:26 AM

We were looking for both of you Eric and Kay. The couple who came to the last cutting exchange (the ones who had the staghorn fern) wanted to thank Kay for her great idea to use plastic tableware as plant markers. They adopted your clever idea and wanted to thank you.

Happy birthday to your brother, Eric. Didn't you just have one yourself?

Posted by **mangoman**, on 04/26 at 08:15 AM