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Second glance a must for new 2010 petunias

NORMAN WINTER

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As we sit firmly in the grip of winter, it's fun to look at new plants and new petunia colours and patterns.

A new Supertunia by the name of Pretty Much Picasso tops the list of unusual petunias coming this spring. I wasn't quite sure how to describe its unique colour, so I went to the Proven Winners website and saw they list the colour as "various." I suppose that's correct.

In Mississippi State University trials, it looked purple with hints of magenta and margins that were a little lighter green than the leaves. I am a big fan of Supertunias as they are vigorous and spreading, reaching about 12 inches tall and spreading outward three feet.

Pan American is not to be outdone with unusual petunias. They are introducing the Sophistica Collection that includes one called Lime Bicolor, which is one of the most exotic petunias you'll ever see. It has lime green, cream and hot pink in somewhat irregular patterns. A Sophistica Antique has the same petals with shades of rose and cream, and a third variety is Sophistica Blue Morn. All are mounding petunias reaching about 14 inches tall.

Pan American also is introducing a multiflora Debonair Collection. The Debonair Dusty Rose is extraordinarily beautiful, with a nostalgic combination of rose and creams. The young flowers have a rich, saturated rose with a yellow-cream centre. As the flowers age, they turn to a softer rose with a whiter cream.

These varieties have an abundance of all colours on one plant. It will definitely be a hit in containers on your porch, patio or deck.

The hit of many trials was Pan American Seed's Shock Wave Denim Blue. The Shock Wave petunias have smaller flowers but with the Easy wave habit; in other words, they are mounding with a slight spread.

What I like about Shock Wave Denim Blue is its fade that would normally be considered a fault, but in this case, it's a plus. Blue petunias are among the hottest sellers every year, and demand always makes them disappear first. Shock Wave Denim Blue flowers start off a rich, deep blue but then fade to various stages of blue depending on their age. In the end, you get a sea or carpet of several blue shades that really stands out in the landscape.

Petunias prefer fertile, well-drained soil; tight, compacted clay will not produce the results you want. Take the time to work in compost, peat or humus so the roots of the plant will expand quickly, and when any spring deluge occurs, they will not be in standing water.



Photos by Norman Winter, Mississippi State University



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