



Trial verdict is in: Annuals enhanced garden



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As the growing season winds down, this is a good time to look at some of the new annuals that were trialed in the garden this summer.

Fantasia 'Cardinal Red Improved' geranium (*Pelargonium*) was a standout in a hot, sunny spot. With very little deadheading, this Simply Beautiful brand geranium bloomed all summer, easily camouflaging spent flowers. Proven Winners' Diamond Frost euphorbia (*Euphorbia*), the best-selling annual on the market, was the perfect foil for the larger flowers and leaves of the geranium in the pot.

Simply Beautiful's Zahara Yellow zinnia (*Zinnia*) grew at the base of the pot of geraniums. I like the Zahara series much better than the Profusion series of zinnias. The color does not wash out as it does on Profusions. Zahara has a looser growing habit with slightly longer stems, which makes cutting the flowers possible for indoor arrangements. Zahara comes in several colors and does not seem to be affected by powdery mildew, a common disease on many zinnias.

Simply Beautiful also sent several lovely coleus (*Solenostemmon*) to trial, including 'Henna,' a 2-foot tall plant with uniform growth and serrated leaves. The color ranges from chartreuse or greenish-tan to a coppery hue. The undersides of the leaves are burgundy. 'Henna' does well in shade or sun.

'Purple Flash,' a Simply Beautiful ornamental pepper (*Capsicum annuum*) was a stunner mixed with Pink Parfait, a Superbena series verbena (*Verbena*) from Proven Winners. The round, marble-size purple peppers shine amid the dark leaves, which have flashes of white. The verbena had a slightly darker center, adding just enough contrast to enhance the trailing plant's beauty.

The Easy Wave Burgundy Star petunia from Simply Beautiful was very low-maintenance and paired nicely with a container with Sangria ornamental peppers. There was some variation in the amount of burgundy on each flower, but that added a lot of charm.

The Hoosier Gardener