

Lantana — Summer Color That's Tough as Nails



With recent improvements to this crop, there are many options to choose from; here are a few.

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Lantana has undergone many improvements in the past few years, which is good because it was already a phenomenal plant to begin with. Depending on where you live in the United States, it is either an annual, perennial or woody shrub. In all parts of the United States though, these plants are disease resistant, drought tolerant, low fertility tolerant, insect attractants, bird attractants and constant full sun color throughout the spring, summer and fall. Forms are available with upright mounding growth habits (*Lantana camara*), trailing habits (*L. montevidensis*) and some intermediate habits.

Most of the varieties make great mixed container additions, but the

more vigorous the cultivar the more likely it is to dominate other component plants. Also, as consumers forget to water throughout the summer, lantana will survive while other plants give up.

It is really hard to go wrong with lantana, but you can do it if you try. There are three things you can't do with lantana: grow them in low light, grow them with wet feet and chill them with low production temperatures and cold, wet soil. Lantana cuttings and liners can even be damaged or delayed if they are chilled in shipment, so don't put them in a cooler if you are ordering unrooted cuttings, keep them at room temperature until planting. Cuttings are also ethylene sensitive so expect some leaf curling when you take them out of the shipping container.

STANDOUTS

Ball FloraPlant's two new series, Landmark and Lucky, look like a great step forward in disease-free uniform cultivars. These series are broken out by size and vigor. The Landmark series is the larger, more vigorous series and comes in a good mix of colors (Flame opens yellow and deepens to a dark rusty red, Gold is a traditional solid bright golden yellow, Lemon Frost opens pale yellow and fades to white, Peach Sunrise opens in yellow tones and deepens to a salmon peach, Pink Dawn opens pale pink yellow and darkens with age to a pale pink and Rose Glow [I think the most unique in the series] opens pink yellow and darkens to a uniform deep pink-rose). All the colors are matched for similar vigor and scheduling, but they will be large.

So if you have grown large varieties before and find they get away from you, try the Lucky series, which has a dwarf habit with less vigor. These plants may work better for you if you find lantana, in general, too vigorous. The series contains four shades of yellow (see Figure 1, page 16), and White (actually opens pale yellow and fades to clear white) was new in 2004.

Bodger Botanicals has released the MorningGlo series of lantana with a mounding habit, medium vigor and five colors. This series originated from American Daylilies, the same source as Patriot lantanas.

With good breeding and names reflective of the colors they contain, it is a nice series for baskets and mixed containers.

Patriot lantanas are the result of breeding efforts from Jack Roberson and were released originally in the early 1990s. The different series are grouped by size and habit, from the Pillars with large upright growth to Petites and Weepers (trailing types); it is an impressive and pretty comprehensive series of patented hybrids. The whole line includes lots of great strong colors and multicolored forms as well.

There are also many unpatented forms on the market that can be a lower cost alternative for some growers.

INVASIVE?

As with any crop that performs this well over such a large area and provides wildlife with food or nectar, lantana has come under fire for invasivity. In the South it has become a disturbance species, filling in abandoned agricultural fields and other disturbed areas and spreading along fence rows. The form of lantana that has proven so aggressive is a *L. camara* — large, woody and thorned with profuse flowering and seed.

Bijan Dehgan, a University of Florida Environmental Horticulture professor, has been studying lantana seed production to give us a better understanding of which cultivars are prone to reseed into the



Top right: Lantana 'Fran'; Above: Lantana 'Red Butler'. (Photos courtesy of Rick Schoellhorn)

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wild. Dehgan found that seed production was always higher when there were many cultivars planted together and that less seed was produced when plantings were a monoculture of one cultivar. Kind of interesting. It appears that lantana likes to mix it up, and Florida ecologists already question how much genetic pollution has occurred

between cultivated and native forms. However, Dehgan has also seen big differences between species, cultivars and forms of lantana in terms of the amount of seed they produce. 'Gold Mound' lantana (or any of the 20 other trade names this form is sold under) seems to produce very little seed, while the truly original *L. camara* cultivars like



Lantana 'Red Spread'

Finding the Plants

Patented Varieties:

Patriot Lantana
www.patriotlantana.com

Ball FloraPlant
www.ballforaplant.com

RobRick
www.robrick.com

Athens Select
www.uga.edu/athensselect

Bodger Botanicals
www.bodger.com

Non-patented Varieties:

Hatchett Creek
www.hatchettcreek.com

**Many other suppliers as well,
ask your broker.**

Culture Quickie: Lantana

Fertilization. 150 ppm balanced liquid feed or low to medium rates of slow release are adequate. Avoid over-fertilizing, as it will lead to stretch and either more PGRs or shearing.

Watering. Keep on the dry side; these plants do not require a lot of water, and drought stress can be a great way to control growth.

Media. Use any commercial peat-lite or peat bark mix with a pH of 5.8-6.2.

Temperatures. 65° F night, 75-90° F day. Cold temperatures will slow growth and increase production time but can also be a way to control unwanted growth.

Light. Full sun and high light levels are essential for good-quality lantana; always try to maximize light for this crop.

Propagation. Easily propagated by cuttings and seed (Note: patented varieties are protected against unlicensed propagation). If you are using unrooted cuttings do not refrigerate; the cold will cause defoliation. Cuttings are also susceptible to ethylene if not removed promptly from shipping containers.

Timing. From rooted cutting to salable 4-inch takes about four weeks. One-gallons (1-2 liner per pot) take about 6-8 weeks.

Pinch. Almost all cultivars require at least one pinch to control growth and promote branching.

PGRs. Plan on using growth regulators with lantana. With the exception of the low-vigor dwarf types, almost all cultivars may require PGRs, depending on your production situation. Check the *GPN* Web site (www.gpnmag.com) for article archives by Jim Barrett and Holly Scoggins on lantana growth control. Cultivar makes a difference so know your cultivars before developing a PGR schedule.

- Daminozide (B-Nine, Crompton/Uniroyal) (2,500-7,500 ppm) and chlormequat chloride (Cycocel, Olympic) (1,500 ppm) tank mix sprays are effective but may need to be reapplied to control growth.

- Paclobutrazol (Bonzi, Syngenta and Piccolo, Fine Agro). Sprays at 10-40 ppm, or drenches at 2-4 ppm can give growers up to 30-percent smaller plants; may need to repeat sprays depending on conditions.

- Uniconazole (Sumagic, Valent). Sprays at 5-25 ppm; I don't have any information on drenches with this chemical.

- Florel (Monterey Chemical). Multiple applications at 200-300 ppm can control height but will delay flowering.

Flowering. As long as light and temperatures are adequate lantana is a non-stop flowering crop.

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Figure 1. There are many other cultivars that can be found on the market, and there is a lot of duplication in naming the same cultivar different names. So buy your plants from a reputable source. The cultivars listed here are some of the newer releases grouped by vigor (how large and how fast they grow).

Cultivar	Color (center-outer)	Habit	Vigor	Supplier
'Landmark Flame'	Yellow-orange	Upright	High	Ball FloraPlant
'Landmark Gold'	Yellow	Upright	High	Ball FloraPlant
'Landmark 'Lemon Frost'	Yellow-white	Upright	High	Ball FloraPlant
'Landmark Peach Sunrise'	Yellow-peach	Upright	High	Ball FloraPlant
'Landmark Pink Dawn'	Yellow-pale pink	Upright	High	Ball FloraPlant
'Landmark Rose Glow'	Yellow-deep pink	Upright	High	Ball FloraPlant
Patriot Pillar	Deen Day Smith: yellow-rose-pink Marc Cathey: yellow-white	Upright	High	Patriot Lantana
'Dallas Red'	Yellow-red	Upright	High	many
'Radiation'	Yellow-orange	Upright	High	many
'Miss Muffett'	Yellow-pale orange	Upright	High	many
'Red Butler'	Deep red	Upright	High	RobRick
'Lucky White'	White	Compact, upright	Med.	Ball FloraPlant
'Lucky Pot of Gold'	Yellow	Compact, upright	Med.	Ball FloraPlant
'Lucky Yellow'	Yellow	Compact, upright	Med.	Ball FloraPlant
'Lucky Lemon Cream'	Pale yellow	Compact, upright	Med.	Ball FloraPlant
Patriot Classic	Cherry: cherry Desert Sunset: yellow-cerise Firewagon: yellow-orange Hallelujah: yellow-pink-mauve Hot Country: fuchsia Parasol: white-pink Passion: pink-deep pink Petticoat: white-pale pink	Compact, upright	Med.	Patriot Lantana
Patriot Weepers	Dove Wings: white Honeylove: yellow-peach Popcorn: yellow-white Sunbeam: yellow-gold	Trailing	Med.	Patriot Lantana
Patriot Ponies	Pony: yellow-red	Mounding	Med.	Patriot Lantana
'Gold Mound'/'New Gold'	Yellow	Mounding	Med.	many
<i>L. montevidensis</i>	Lavender	Trailing	Med.	many
<i>L. trifolia</i>	Purple pink	Upright	Med.	Latin America
<i>L. depressa</i>	Yellow	Mounding	Med.	SE U.S. Native
<i>L. involucrata</i>	Pink	Upright	Med.	SE U.S. Native
'Athen's Rose'	Pale pink-rose pink	Mounding	Med.	Athen's Select
'Red Spread'	Deep red-orange	Mounding	Med.	RobRick
'Fran'	Deep red	Upright	Med.	RobRick
'Ruth'	Red-orange	Upright	Med.	RobRick
Patriot Petites	Cowboy: yellow-orange Rainbow: yellow-cerise	Dwarf, mounding	Low	Patriot Lantana
<i>L. montevidensis</i> 'Alba'	White	Trailing	Low	many
'Samantha' (variegated)	Yellow	Upright	Low	many
'Ann Marie'	Carmine-pink-yellow	Dwarf, upright	Low	RobRick

'Miss Muffett', 'Radiation' and the larger forms produce the most seed.

All this aside, lantana hybrids are still one of the strongest, heat- and drought-tolerant, summer-flowering crops we have. If you are looking for ways to stretch your season into summer this is a great option to look into. If you really want to do something different try growing some lantana standards. They would make a killer signature item for small market areas. Just use the larger lantana cultivars, and if you have a lot of free time, you can practice your grafting

skills by getting one of the trailing forms grafted on the top. [GPN](#)

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