





Top: Osteospermum 'Asti White'. **Middle:** Viola 'Skippy XL Plum-Gold'. **Bottom:** Hosta 'Paradigm'.

Winner's Circle

Honored for their strength and versatility, this year's winning varieties impressed judges around the world.

By Jasmina Radjevic

ost growers realize that the success of the plants they grow depends on many different factors, such as climatic conditions, vulnerability to pests and/or diseases, use of plant growth regulators and so on. This is why *GPN* lists all the winners from various associations in the annual winner's showcase. These associations gather trial and evaluation results and award varieties based on several factors. Judges for these associations use standardized grading systems to score how well varieties perform.

The following information can benefit growers in a variety of ways. Award-winning varieties can be used as a marketing tool, as most garden centers prefer to carry plants with proven success. As you may already know, growing extraordinary plants is critical to your business and reputation. All-America Selections, American Hosta Growers Association, Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, Fleuroselect, FloraStar and Perennial Plant Association are all organizations respected and recognized for the valuable information they provide growers and retailers. Read on to learn more about this year's winners.

All-America Selections

The purpose of All-America Selections (AAS) is to test new cultivars, to inform gardeners about the AAS winners and to earn gardeners' trust in the AAS winners. The independent judges determine winners by each variety's vigor, productivity and ability to thrive across the country. Trial grounds are sites where side-by-side comparison trials are conducted and supervised

by a judge responsible for the growing and methodical evaluation of the varieties. Entries are divided into four different categories: vegetable, flower, bedding plant and cool-season bedding plant.

'Asti White' (Goldsmith Seeds). Osteospermum 'Asti White', an F1 hybrid white-flowered variety propagated from seed, is the 2008 AAS bedding plant award winner. It was chosen for its uniform plant size and flowering time. From plug to flowering plant requires about 14-16 weeks in 4-inch pots or larger. 'Asti White' was bred to be produced for several seasons. When flowering, the large 2- to 2¾-inch single flowers with bright blue centers look similar to daisy blooms. This variety was bred to be heat and drought tolerant during summer months. Plants may also tolerate light frosts in early spring or extended fall seasons.

'Skippy XL Plum-Gold' (Kieft Seeds Holland). Winner of the cool-season bedding plant category is viola 'Skippy XL Plum-Gold'. It has a golden face, black whiskers and shades of plum surrounding the face or blotch. This variety was tested in southern locations during the winter, and judges found it to be cold and heat tolerant in trial grounds. 'Skippy XL Plum-Gold' needs about 10 weeks from sow to bloom and is recommended for 3- to 4-inch flowering pots or combination planters with bulbs or annuals. Mature plants may spread 6-8 inches in full sun.

American Hosta Growers Association

Each year, there is an increasing number of hosta cultivars being introduced, and it may be difficult for growers to choose which ones will •



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variety information

be most beneficial. That is why the American Hosta Growers Association (AHGA) began presenting the Hosta Of The Year Award in 1996. Winners, selected by a vote of AHGA members, are good garden plants in all regions of the country and widely available in sufficient supply for about \$15 in the selection year.

'Paradigm' (Shady Oaks Nursery). This hosta from the west coast was bred to make a large clump about 20 inches high and 46 inches wide. It features bright golden-yellow, heartshaped leaves bordered by a wide, dark-green margin. The leaves are heavily puckered. Masses of near-white flowers should open in June and July. It prefers morning sun, afternoon shade and a cool, moist spot in the garden. Hosta 'Paradigm' was chosen for its color combination and good performance in different regions of the country.

Association Of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

Formed in 1988, the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers (ASCFG) works to unite and inform growers in the production and marketing of field and greenhouse cut flowers. Each year, the association tests the latest in cut flowers to determine those that perform well.

'Limelight' (Spring Meadow Nursery/Proven Winners). This variety is ASCFG's Fresh Cut Flower of the Year. This hydrangea is fast growing; harvesting can start the year after planting. The number of harvestable stems should continue to increase each year as the plants mature. Young shoots can be pinched in the spring to increase stem number and decrease head size. Without pinching or pruning, the flower heads can be very large. The vase life of the immature heads showing some green is 8-12 days, the older heads should be 10-14 days.

'Hot Biscuits'. This amaranthus is the winner of ASCFG's Dried Cut Flower of the Year. It has tall, large plumes of densely packed, small, golden-brown flowers. The heads are so large that support should be provided. Smaller stems can be produced by pinching plants when young or by cutting the main spike early and harvesting the laterals. One pest to watch for







Top: Hydrangea 'Limelight'. Middle: Amaranthus 'Hot Biscuits'. Bottom: Begonia 'Volumia Rose Bicolor'.







Top: Delphinium 'Sydney Light Blue'. Middle: Lavandula 'Ellagance Purple'. Bottom: Monarda 'Bergamo'.

is the flea beetle. Although it is a dried cut flower, it can also be used fresh.

Fleuroselect

Each year, Fleuroselect presents Gold Medal honors to new flower varieties. Each of these varieties has been tested by expert independent judges at various trial locations around Europe and was found to be significantly superior compared to other existing varieties.

'Volumia Rose Bicolor' (S&G Flowers). According to judges, this begonia has exceptional garden performance throughout the season. Another significant aspect of this variety is its neat and compact habit. 'Volumia Rose Bicolor' was bred to work well in container gardens, planters, pots, hanging baskets and window boxes. Flowering should occur in April through first frost. This plant should reach approximately 11 inches tall and spread 13 inches. It has a ballshaped plant form with darkgreen, round-shaped leaves.

'Sydney Light Blue' (Kieft Seeds Holland). Delphinium consolida is native to the Northern Hemisphere and the high mountains of tropical Africa. 'Sydney Light Blue' features pastel lightblue blooms and was bred to have strong and uniform flowering spikes. It flowers from May to October depending on sowing time. At about 45 inches tall, this variety may be suitable for cut flower cultivation because of its vertical branching. It should be sown at 59-62° F from April onwards and grown at 50-59° F. Do not disturb tap root while transplanting.

'Ellagance Purple' (Kieft Seeds Holland). Lavandula is an evergreen, bushy shrub with dense spikes of fragrant, deep-blue flowers and narrow, silver-gray leaves. Judges were impressed by the earliness, uniformity, color and floridity of this new variety. 'Ellagance Purple' has a compact, uniform plant habit and is free flowering. It should flower from June to October. Its height reaches about 12 inches, and it spreads nearly 10 inches. This variety should be grown at 59-64° F in mid-May under high light in 4- to 6-inch containers.

'Bergamo' (Kieft Seeds Holland). Monarda x hybrida 'Bergamo' ▶

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features distinctive flower heads, each consisting of numerous curving tubular flowers growing out from a central point. The annual monarda was bred to produce masses of rose-purple flowers from June to August. 'Bergamo' has an interesting, compact form and reaches approxi-

mately 19-25 inches tall. This variety was bred to be mildew resistant.

'Cappuccino' (Clause Tézier). Rudbeckia, also known as black-eyed Susan, grow in prairies, dry fields, open woods and along the roadside. 'Cappuccino' demonstrates strong

vigor and good basal branching. This variety was bred to produce large, bronze-brown blooms for an extended period of time. It should reach about 31 inches tall. Sow at 68° F in March, and keep humidity low. Grow at 61° F, transplanting after five weeks. Plant out in mid-May.

'Fairy Queen' (Ernst Benary of America). Salvia farinacea is an herbaceous perennial that is commonly grown as an annual in cold winter areas. This new variety bears multiple spikes of bicolor blue and white flowers on dark flower stems from June to October. 'Fairy Queen' has a bushy







Top: Rudbeckia 'Cappuccino'. **Middle:** Salvia 'Fairy Queen'. **Bottom:** Viola 'Floral Power'.

Contact Information

For more information on these winners, direct your inquiries to these companies:

Clause Tézier

+30 (0) 475 57 57 57 www.clausetezier.com

Goldsmith Seeds

(800) 549-0158 www.goldsmithseeds.com

Ernst Benary of America

(815) 895-6705 www.benary.com

K. Sahin Zaden

+31 (0) 172 44 77 77 www.sahin.nl

Kieft Seeds Holland

(360) 445-2031 www.kieftseedsholland.com

S&G Flowers

(800) 323-7253 www.syngenta.com

Shady Oaks Nursery

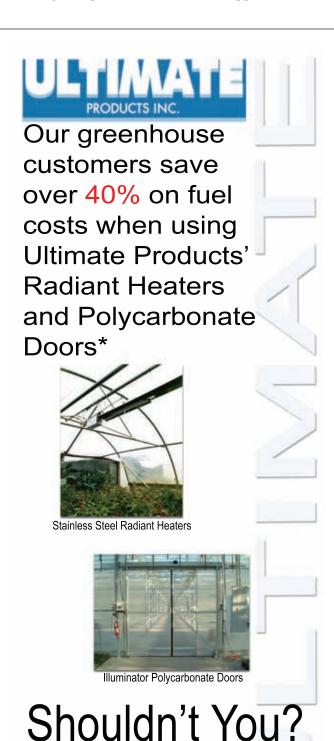
(507) 835-5033 www.shadyoaks.com

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Top: Carnation 'Margarita'. **Bottom:** Nepeta 'Walker's Low'.

and compact habit with thick stems. It reaches approximately 15-16 inches tall. Sow at 64° F in early March, and grow at 57° F. Plant out in May.

'Floral Power' (K. Sahin Zaden). This new variety features bright orange faces and red caps on compact, uniform and bushy plants. 'Floral Power' was bred to flower year round and reach about 4 inches tall. It should be sown at 64-68° F from mid-July in a plug or seed tray covered with vermiculite. Grow at 50-54° F in a 3- to 4-inch container applying a dwarfing agent.

FloraStar

FloraStar analyzes plants grown throughout the United States and judges them based on form, disease resistance, fragrance and shipping ability.

'Margarita' (Sunflor). Under normal conditions, this pot carnation remains sufficiently compact. Treatment with growth regulators should not be necessary. 'Margarita' requires plenty of water. When adding water, make sure the crop dries as quickly as possible; too much water may result in a frail plant. This variety needs pinching as soon as the main bud appears after approximately 4-6 weeks. This is necessary to ensure good branching and growth. Pests to watch for are aphids, thrips and red spider mites. Leaf spot and foot rot are diseases that may affect 'Margarita'.

Perennial Plant Association

The Perennial Plant of the Year Program promotes the use of perennials by selecting four varieties from an extensive list of nominations made earlier by association members. Each year, members cast their votes for one of the four selected plants with the following attributes: suitable for a wide range of climate types, low maintenance, easily propagated and exhibits multiple seasonal interest.

'Walker's Low'. This nepeta was bred to bloom continuously throughout the season if properly pruned. Hardy to Zones 3-8, this

variety prefers full sun but should tolerate shade in hot climates. It prefers a well-drained soil and neutral pH level. 'Walker's Low' features silver-green foliage and dark blue-purple flowers from late spring to frost. It reaches about 36 inches tall with a spread of 30-36 inches.

Jasmina Radjevic is associate editor of GPN. She can be reached at jradjevic@sgcmail.com or (847) 391-1004.

Editor's Note: Nepeta 'Walker's Low' photo courtesy of Steven Still of Perennial Plant Association.

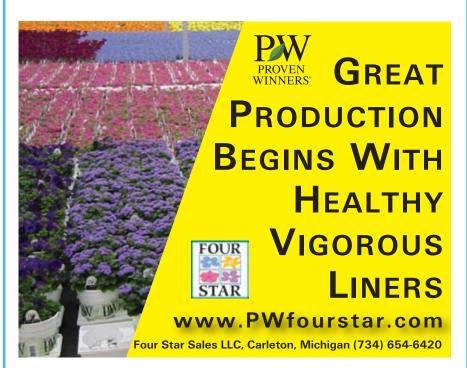
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