

Brilliant and Resilient ANNUALS

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Read on for a potpourri of attention grabbers on display at the Dallas Arboretum.

We have all experienced that moment when we enter a summer trial and our eyes are drawn to varieties that evoke dynamic energy and sudden impact. What causes this rush of energy and focus on specific plants? There are many qualities that can be attributed to this attraction, including vibrancy, brightness, efflorescence, uniqueness and floriferousness. As we know, color is relative and color dominance is dependent on the strength of the hue, sharpness of colors, and our perception of color.

Color dominance is put to the test in Texas with extreme summer conditions and average high temperatures in the 90s and lows in the 70s through July and August, with average humidity of 70%. I visit the Dallas Arboretum every summer to evaluate the landscape beds and containers. The varieties that I chose to highlight are current and new introductions that demonstrated outstanding heat tolerance, durability and a prolific flower canopy.

1. CATHARANTHUS 'SOIRÉE KAWAII WHITE PEPPERMINT'

Suntory Flowers

The award-winning Soirée Kawaii is unquestionably one of the best series for patio containers and borders in landscape plantings deep into late summer and fall. Year after year in trial gardens, private gardens and landscape sites they stand the test of time and perform until frost with uniformity, a mounded compact habit, and a canopy of small but impactful flowers that require no deadheading. White Peppermint is eye catching with

stable pure white petals and a red center. The Arboretum used this variety in multiple containers throughout the gardens, and in daylight its cascading habit and prolific flowering was attention grabbing. In evening light this variety becomes luminous, shining brightly. I have incorporated this series in my container trials since its introduction, and when the first frost arrives this is one of the last series to remain flowering. There are now eight colors available for 2022.

2. RUDBECKIA 'MINIBECKIA FLAME'

Garden Genetics

The Garden Choice alliance, comprised of Eason Horticultural Resources, Botanical Trading Company, Pioneer Gardens and Garden Genetics, entered the summer trial network last year and continued this year with a diverse selection of material in regional trial gardens, including the exceptional rudbeckia 'MiniBeckia Flame'. This is a hirta species listed as Zone 5b hardy, but it has application in annual programs because of its year-round programmability. The distinctive, large, 4-inch flowers have yellow petals, a red eye and black centers. The plants in the landscape bed were compact and self branching, and the flowers positioned above the foliage created a colorful canopy. I visited the Plantpeddler trial a month later in northeast Iowa and Flame in the container trial manifested outstanding branching and a prolific flower canopy. The mature height is 18 to 24 inches, and what catches the eye is those large, stunning and high-impact flowers. This variety will be available from multiple liner suppliers in various tray sizes for 2022.



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3. GERANIUM 'EXOTICA CORAL SUNRISE'

Syngenta Flowers

The breeding and introduction of new and unique novelty geraniums continues to expand. What sets these new varieties apart from what I call the traditional geranium is the foliage colors, striking zonation, and the distinctive and unusual flower forms and colors. 'Exotica Coral Sunrise' manifested chartreuse foliage, dark central zonation, a strong upright habit, and medium vigor with striking flowers and coral tones that contrasted with the bright foliage. It demonstrated uniformity in multiple trials this summer including Metrolina, Young's Plant Farm and the Dallas Arboretum container trial. Coral Sunrise will have excellent retail appeal with production application in multiple sizes, and consumers will undoubtedly use this variety in mixed containers where it will offer intense contrast.

4. SALVIA 'UNPLUGGED SO BLUE'

Proven Winners

This award-winning *Salvia farinacea* needs no introduction, and its summer performance speaks for itself. It manifested an abundance of brilliant blue flower spikes in the Arboretum trial in late July under extreme heat and humidity, and it demonstrated this profuse flowering and adaptability a week later in the Colorado State trial with cool night temperatures, low humidity, and intense sunlight. This variety flowers prolifically with a strong upright habit that matures at 18 to 24 inches. It has application in bench run programs for its uniformity and early flowering. The more compact size makes it an ideal thriller in mixed containers, quart and gallon programs. 'Unplugged So Pink' has been introduced for 2022 to expand the color range.

5. COLEUS 'MAIN STREET YONGE STREET'

Dümmen Orange

This new addition to the Main Street series received excellent performance ratings at multiple trials this summer, and it performed well in my container trial in Kansas

City. Many friends and neighbors have commented on the vibrancy and brightness of this new coleus variety. The leaves are narrow with rounded teeth on the margins. The burgundy red foliage is stable and nonfading. I was impressed by the color stability, upright

form, uniform habit and strong branching. Yonge Street is an excellent complement to the AAS winner Beale Street. The Main Street series now has 19 varieties including the new introductions Bourbon Street, Orchard Road, Venice Boulevard and Yonge Street.



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This is the most uniform and diverse coleus series in the industry, and this uniformity offers application for bench run spring production and the opportunity to combine varieties in patio containers.

6. CLEOME SPARKLER 2.0 SERIES

Syngenta Flowers

The Sparkler series has been improved for 2022, and I have seen the results of these improvements

at multiple trial sites this summer. The series has compactness, vigor, uniformity, stronger upright habit and a prolific flower canopy. The series has regional limitations with its high heat and light requirements to maximize growth and flower development, but as the season progresses the series demonstrates its potential. It will have outstanding application in landscapes and as a thriller in large patio containers. There are five colors and a mix for 2022, and liners will be available from multiple plug suppliers.

7. PORTULACA 'PAZZAZ NANO HOT PINK'

Danziger

It is my view that every plant series has one variety that is the prototype and grabs your attention when you see it in comparison to the entire series in a landscape bed or container trial. There were numerous portulaca varieties in the container trial, and the variety 'Pazzaz Nano Hot Pink' stood out from the crowd with its bright, large, vibrant, and prolific flowering with tight internodes and a compact habit which is indicative of the series. There are six colors in the series, including Purple which is new for 2022. This is a naturally compact series and flowers early, expanding the selling window. This

series is outstanding for quart and mixed container production and manageable for the consumer in patio combinations.

8. EVOLVULUS 'BEACH BUM BLUE'

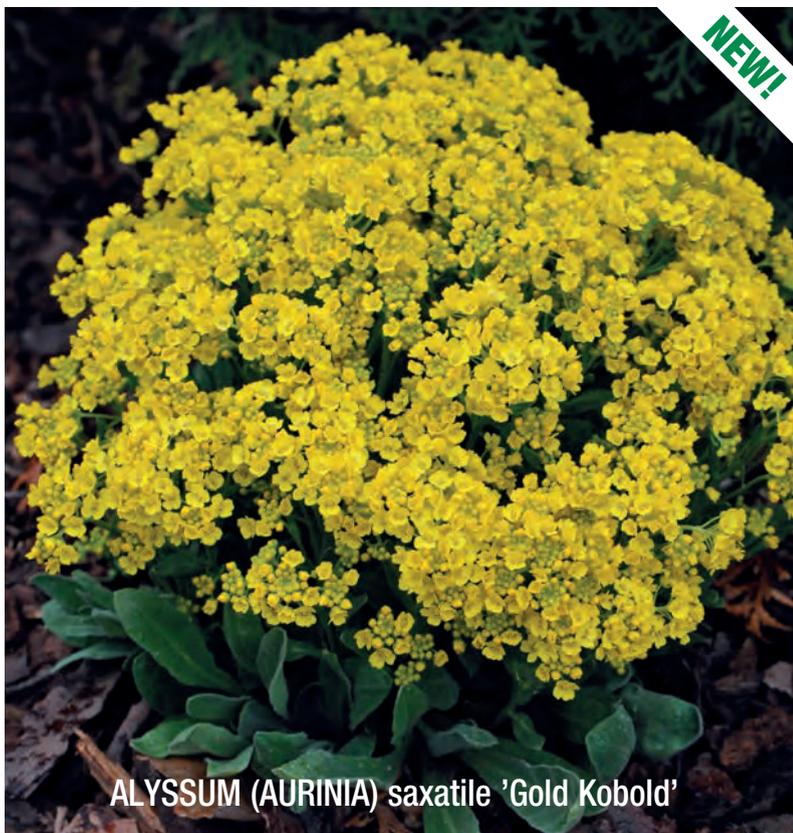
Dümmen Orange

This variety was a standout performer in the Arboretum landscape beds. This new evolvulus has excellent branching, heat and drought tolerance, a compact but spreading habit, textured gray green foliage, light blue flowers, and a prolific flower canopy. This variety will mature at 6 inches and spread 12 inches. 'Beach Bum Blue' will tolerate extreme heat in a full sun exposure, has application in quarts and mixed containers, and will make an outstanding border in landscape sites.

9. PORTULACA 'COLORBLAST LEMON TWIST'

Westhoff

The ColorBlast portulaca series is one of the most extensive in the industry with doubles, solids and bicolors. This summer the Arboretum utilized Lemon Twist in numerous landscape beds, and it exhibited uniformity, color coverage, durability, and vibrant flowers. The flowers are distinctive with golden yellow centers and yellow petals with soft white



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stripes. The ColorBlast doubles add value with their dramatic and ostentatious flower forms, which bring another level of diversity to the entire portfolio, which includes four solid colors, five bicolors and four assorted mixes.

10. IMPATIENS 'SUNSTANDING NEON ROSE'

Dümmen Orange

The Arboretum has many colorful and explosive landscape beds that demand attention, and this was true of the 'Sunstanding Neon Rose' landscape beds, which greeted me as I began my tour of the gardens. This standalone variety is more vigorous than the Apollo or Helios series, but matches those series in uniformity and summer performance. This is one of the original introductions, and it offers heat tolerance and prolific flowering in the landscape. It was a showstopper and a landscaper's dream in the Arboretum. There are seven bright and luminous colors in this family; if you are looking for a uniform and tough component for shade or sun beds this Sunstanding class should be considered.



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11. HELIANTHUS 'SUNCREDIBLE SATURN'

Proven Winners

The National Garden Bureau designated 2021 as the Year of the Sunflower, and it is only fitting that Proven Winners would introduce a new bicolor helianthus. 'Suncredible Yellow' was introduced last year, and its companion Saturn will be introduced for 2022. This variety offers sunshine colored yellow flowers with a russet red ring and black center. In the landscape beds, it demonstrated exceptional heat tolerance and floriferousness, which was what you expect from a sunflower in mid summer. Saturn has deep green foliage, dark stems, excellent branching, and 3- to 4-inch flowers that rise above the foliage. It requires minimal deadheading, and is more compact with darker foliage



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than 'Suncredible Yellow'. These features were also manifested in the Colorado State trial I visited a week later. Application will include a thriller in large containers and as a background planting in landscape beds. Although this variety is listed as maturing at 24 to 36 inches, in the trials that I have visited this summer the plants were taller and matured at 36 to 42 inches.

12. IMPATIENS 'SUNSTANDING JAZZY HOT PINK'

Dümmen Orange

This subseries, consisting of Coral and Hot Pink, debuted in 2020 and was ubiquitous in many spring programs this year. There are so many adjectives to describe this series, including exotic, tropical, colorful, heat tolerant and decorative. The plants in the Arboretum were striking with outstanding uniformity, excellent branching, and flowers that were profuse above the canopy. I visited the Metrolina trial in mid-August and witnessed the same attributes in their trial beds. The two varieties are versatile with multiple applications in beds and large combination containers with flower or foliage components. I grew them in beds in partial shade as well as in 18-inch containers in full sun, and they did equally well in both locations.



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13. PETUNIA 'DURABLOOM WATERMELON'

Dümmen Orange

Petunia 'DuraBloom Royal Pink' was the first introduction in the series followed by six varieties for 2021, and four new colors have been added for 2022: Yellow, White, Silver and Red. This is an interspecific petunia series with exceptional vigor, heat tolerance and vibrant long-lasting color. I attended the University of Georgia trial in late May, and the DuraBloom varieties on display in baskets manifested excellent vigor, strong color retention and prolific flowering. This performance continued at the Dallas Arboretum. 'DuraBloom

Watermelon', introduced last year, was one of the most floriferous petunias in the trial and one of my favorites for its unusual color, prolific flowering, and vibrancy. This series has received high marks in multiple field trials. I trialed the entire series in my containers and beds in the Kansas City area, where we experience high day and night temperatures and excessive humidity levels. All the colors demonstrated vigor, durability and prolific flowering throughout the summer. The two most vigorous varieties in the series, Electric Lilac and Royal Pink, were the most floriferous in my container trial. The series is day length neutral with production application in quarts, mixed containers, and landscape beds. Four Confetti Garden Endurables with DuraBloom petunias will be available for 2022.

14. VERBENA 'VANESSA OPTIK LAVENDER'

Danziger

The world of verbena expands every year with new colors, disease resistance, sizes, increased heat and disease tolerance, and minimal cycling. Danziger entered the verbena arena with the Vanessa series and followed this up with the Vanessa Compact series. Last year, I highlighted 'Vanessa Bicolor Indigo' for its striking and vibrant indigo and white flowers in multiple trials. 'Vanessa Compact Optik Lavender' is equally unique with its pronounced and eye-catching white eye, which contrasts strikingly with the lavender petals. It was the most floriferous verbena in the container trial and definitely my favorite. The series is naturally compact with dense branching and forms a colorful canopy. The color options are significant with 11 varieties to choose from. I have observed this series in regional trials the past two years, and flower cycling has been minimal with no mildew evident late into the summer. This compact series has application in quarts and mixed containers. [gpn](https://www.gpn.com)



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