

WINNER'S CIRCLE

The best of the best — winners from numerous award associations.

By Carrie Burns



Year after year, All-America Selections, All-America Rose Selections, The Perennial Plant Association, The American Hosta Growers Association, All-America Daylily Selection Council and FloraStar select the plants under their mandate that stand out from the rest. Judges evaluate how the variety performed during the trialing period, measuring disease resistance, hardiness, color and novelty. These awards are a great selling point, as varieties have been selected by independent judges and are certain performers.

ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS 2003

Agastache foeniculum 'Golden Jubilee's' golden foliage gently modulates to lime-green on the lower leaves, creating pronounced and commanding colors in the garden. Golden Jubilee performs well in full sun or partial shade and will initiate buds during the long days of summer. Dense spikes of lavender-blue florets crown the plants and contrast with its golden foliage for a striking display. In addition to being a summer bloomer, this plant has a strong mint fragrance when leaves are crushed. Mature plants can reach 20 inches tall and spread 10-15 inches.

Dianthus caryophyllus 'Can Can Scarlet' is a full-flowering, vibrant red carnation bred to perform in the

garden. This vigorous variety produces large, double flowers on strong, 16-inch stems.

Dianthus chinensis 'Corona Cherry Magic' is the first Dianthus with a capricious bicolor pattern of variable cherry-red and lavender. Plants will flower early and will produce 2-inch flowers. Mature plants reach 7-9 inches tall, spreading about 8-10 inches in a full-sun location.

The first white-flowering Eustoma that thrives in a sunny garden, 'Forever White' exhibited superior garden performance in AAS Trials across North America. The 12-inch, compact-branching plant flowered from spring to fall, with 2-inch, ivory-white blooms that covered the plant at various times throughout the growing season.

Gaillardia 'Sundance Bicolor' (not pictured) is an unusual bicolor containing mahogany-red and yellow flowers. The 2-inch, globe-shaped composite flowers are primarily double. Sundance Bicolor shows heat and drought tolerances and is low-maintenance, with no pinching or staking. Judges also noted that Sundance Bicolor has the potential for nonstop blooming throughout the growing season, and plants are relatively pest-free.

A stately plant reaching 3-5 feet, Pennisetum 'Purple Majesty' ornamental millet has wide, purple leaf blades and is embellished with 8- to 12-inch flower spikes that mature to reddish-purple seed spikes that

attract birds that snack on the seed. Purple Majesty is very tolerant of heat and drought.

Trailing Petunia 'Blue Wave' has dark blue, velvety, 2-inch blooms that cover the plant for the entire growing season. The spreading habit is similar to 'Purple Wave', with the potential for Blue Wave to spread 3-4 feet in one growing season. Mature plant height can be 4-7 inches. Plants also recover quickly from severe weather.

Petunia 'Merlin Blue Morn' (not pictured) offers gardeners a unique bicolor pattern. The 2-inch single blooms are white with a soft transition to velvety blue on the edge. This bicolor design has consumer appeal and will translate into impulse sales since it stands out among other multiflora petunias. The blue and white pattern of Merlin Blue Morn is desirable due to the cooling effect of these colors on a hot summer afternoon.

Rudbeckia hirta 'Prairie Sun' has a stunning light/dark yellow combination, sturdy upright stems and excellent weather resistance. It produces the unique color combination of a dark green "cone" at the center and golden-yellow petals with pale edges. Its stems grow to a height of approximately 31 inches and flower abundantly from July until October.

Vinca 'Jaio Dark Red' is described as the "best red yet in



Top to bottom: Agastache 'Golden Jubilee', dianthus 'Can Can Scarlet', Lisianthus 'Forever White'; Left to right: ornamental millet 'Purple Majesty', petunia 'Blue Wave', rudbeckia 'Prairie Sun'.



vinca" by an AAS judge. The velvety, opulent deep red color is distinctive, and each large 2-inch bloom has a contrasting small white center.

ALL-AMERICA ROSE SELECTIONS 2003

Hybrid Tea lovers will find the pureness of 'Whisper' and its white color most attractive. Developed by Colin Dickson in Ireland, Whisper enchants the viewer with classically formed flowers of creamy white contrasted against dark green, semi-glossy leaves. This rose will grow up to 5 x 4 feet and boasts 5-inch flowers.

'Hot Cocoa' is a novel, brownish-orange floribunda washed with smoke on the top and a deep rusty orange on the underside. Large, 4-inch flowers hold their color and tolerate heat very well. Tom Carruth hybridized this vigorous, disease-resistant rose by crossing 'Playboy' and 'Altissimo' with 'Livin' Easy'.

'Eureka', which is nearly as wide as it is tall, provides a sparkling, hedge-type look with its glittering gold hues. Plants reach a height of three feet and produce 4-inch, apricot-yellow flowers in groups of three or five. Eureka will become very popular because of its abundant blooms, re-blooming ability, glossy green leaves and light fragrance. The Korde Company hybridized Eureka from 'Bernstein Rose' and 'Sun Flare'.

The 2003 Grandiflora winner, 'Cherry Parfait' (not pictured) has white petals with a broad red edge. Excellent in all climates, Cherry Parfait's loose habit makes it a perfect companion plant for perennials and shrubbery. Seemingly always in bloom, this bicolor rose is attractive throughout the season and is accented by dark foliage. Cherry Parfait was hybridized by the famed house of Meilland from a combination of 'Meidanu' and 'Macman' with 'Meichoiju'.

PERENNIAL PLANT ASSOCIATION 2003

Leucanthemum 'Becky' has shiny, deep-green leaves that hold up well in heat and humidity. This long-lived variety has gained so much attention that the Perennial Plant Association has selected Leucanthemum Becky the 2003 Perennial Plant of the Year. Becky reaches three feet tall and produces large, 3-inch, single white flowers with yellow centers from



June-August. It is both heat- and cold-hardy in Zones 4-9 and can be grown under full sun to partial shade in an average to dry soil. This shasta daisy attracts butterflies in the garden.

THE AMERICAN HOSTA GROWERS ASSOCIATION 2003

The American Hosta Growers Association has selected 'Regal Splendor' as its 2003 Hosta of the Year. A mature Regal Splendor can grow to 36 x 40 ▶

Top, left to right: Vinca 'Jaio Dark Red', 'Whisper', 'Hot Cocoa', 'Eureka'; Bottom: 'Regal Splendor'.



inches, with 10- x 5-inch, pointed, bluish-gray leaves with wavy, creamy white margins. A notable feature of the plant is its upright growing habit. In July, lavender flowers appear on scapes that can reach five feet.

FLORASTAR 2002 WINNERS

'Global Red Peppermint' geranium has white and burgundy/red bicolor flowers rather than rose and white from current varieties. Additionally, Red Peppermint possesses a habit that is very well-behaved and gently trailing, and exhibits excellent heat tolerance.

'Applause Red' (not pictured) is a 4½-inch New Guinea impatiens that has a very well-behaved habit and can easily be described as a mini. It displays a true red color that is difficult to find in other New Guinea impatiens. Applause Red also exhibits a pedigree of heat tolerance and garden performance.



Clockwise from top left: Shasta daisy 'Becky' (courtesy of Rod Grasmann), geranium 'Global Red Peppermint', 'Judith', 'Orange Crush'.

ALL-AMERICAN DAYLILY SELECTION COUNCIL 2002

'Judith', with its profusion of glowing pink blossoms, is the exhibition category winner. A large, vigorous variety, Judith works well either in the back of a perennial bed or among roses. Judith is easy to grow and thrives in full sun, blooming 40-150 days per year. Blooms are held erect on 22- to 32-inch stems and are surrounded by vigorous foliage 16-24 inches tall.

Leebea 'Orange Crush's' uniform foliage and profusion of blooms work well in a mass planting. Up close, a darker orange throat is noticeable on the slightly ruffled orange blooms. Its 14- to 20-inch foliage has a blue-green cast, even out of bloom. Leebea Orange Crush blooms at a height of 20-26 inches in full sun.

'Bitsy' (not pictured) is one of the longest-blooming varieties the AADSC has encountered in 12 years of testing. Its 2-inch blooms appear very early in the season above 12-20 inches of grassy foliage. When combined with spring bulbs, Bitsy blooms just as they finish, while its vigorous growth helps hide the spent bulb foliage. Bitsy thrives in full sun and can be grown without reservation in all parts of the United States. 🌱

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