

Winners' Circle

There are plenty of good varieties to choose from, but your customers deserve the best. Here are this year's top picks from renowned plant associations.

By Jasmina Radjevic



Each year, All-America Rose Selections, All-America Selections, All-American Daylily Council, American Hosta Growers Association, American Ivy Society, Association of Speciality Cut Flower Growers, Fleuroselect and Perennial Plant Association trial various varieties and choose winners based on factors such as flower production, color, disease resistance, vigor and fragrance. It's up to you to offer varieties that will keep your customers coming back for more, and the last thing you need is for your customers to be less than satisfied with their new plant purchases. That's why we've gathered all the information on this year's winners. Read on to learn more about these impressive varieties.

All-America Rose Selections

www.rose.org

'Carefree Spirit' (Conard-Pyle Co., www.conard-pyle.com). Recognizing that consumers want roses that are easy to care for, in 2004, AARS stopped spraying fungicides on all shrub roses in its test gardens. 'Carefree Spirit' is the first and only landscape shrub to date to endure this testing and prevail as a winner. This mounding rose produces deep-red blossoms with white twinkles in their eyes. This



Left: Rose 'Pink Promise'. Above: Rose 'Carefree Spirit'.



Rose 'Cinco de Mayo'

variety was hybridized by Jacques Mouchotte, director of research at Meilland International.

'Pink Promise' (Coiner Nursery, www.coinernursery.com). Hybridized by Jim Coiner, this variety is a graceful bloomer with long stems for cutting. This fragrant beauty is enhanced by the contrast of its large pink blossoms set against lush dark-green foliage. The National Breast Cancer Foundation selected this rose to represent officially a continual promise of compassion and awareness. For every 'Pink Promise' purchased, a percentage of sales will be donated to the foundation to help extend women's lives through education and early detection.

'Cinco de Mayo' (Weeks Roses, www.weeksroses.com). Mysteriously colored and novel, this rose is an indescribable blend of smoked lavender and rusty red-orange. The flowers, which hold well and are fast to repeat, radiate the smell of fresh-cut golden apples. This floribunda has excellent disease resistance and has performed well across the country with little to no care.

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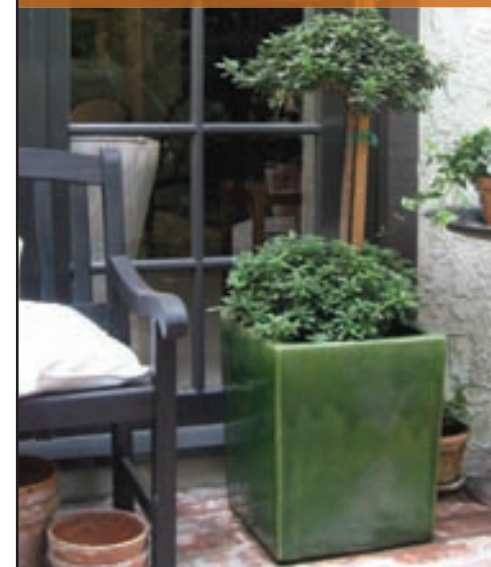
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All-America Selections

www.all-america-selections.org

'Mesa Yellow' (PanAmerican Seed, www.panamseed.com).

The AAS flower award winner 'Mesa Yellow' was chosen for its uniformity of seed germination and young plant performance. This gail-

lardia quickly fills in the container, making it adaptable to 4-inch and larger containers. A branching, mounding habit with horizontal vigor describes 'Mesa Yellow' so that only one plant per pot is needed. Gardeners will enjoy this variety for its continuous blooming, controlled

plant height (18-20 inches) and its natural drought tolerance.

'Twinny Peach' (Hem Genetics, www.hemgenetics.com).

This bedding plant award winner is a unique dwarf snapdragon with a double or butterfly flower form. The name Twinny refers to twins or dou-

bles, a reminder of the double flower form. Flowers are peach, yellow or light orange blending together for a novel presentation. When grown in full sun, 'Twinny Peach' can reach 12-14 inches tall, spreading 7-8 inches. Gardeners can expect spikes of pastel colors throughout the growing season.

'Zahara Starlight Rose' (Pan American Seed, www.panamseed.com). The first zinnia with rose and white bicolor blooms, also winning the bedding plant cat-



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From top: Snapdragon 'Twinny Peach'; Daylily 'Dream Souffle'; Hosta 'Earth Angel'

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Hedera helix 'Eva'

egory, is resistant to leaf spot and mildew. The single rose and white 2-inch blooms are attractive and encourage impulse sales. Gardeners will find these zinnia plants mature at 12-14 inches, tolerating hot and dry or wet summer growing conditions. AAS judges noted exceptional garden performance in spite of higher than normal rainfall. It provided continuous flower color with minimal plant care.

All-American Daylily Council

www.allamericandaylily.com

'Dream Souffle'. The fluffy double-petaled blooms of 'Dream Souffle' are a pastel rose-pink blended with cream and flushed with yellow in the center. It blooms mid-season at 24-30 inches in height above 16-20 inch arching green deciduous foliage. It then repeat blooms, giving a total bloom period ranging from 30 to 80 days per year. This variety is recommended for USDA Zones 4 through 10.



Zinnia 'Uproar Rose'

American Hosta Growers Association

www.hostagrowers.org

'Earth Angel' (H. Hansen/Shady Oaks Nursery, www.shadyoaksnursery.com). A sport of 'Blue Angel', 'Earth Angel' is one of the largest variegated hostas growing to about 30x68 inches or larger. It has large heart-shaped blue-green leaves and a wide yellow border that becomes creamy white in summer. This hosta produces tall, straight scapes of large near-white flowers in late June or July that demand attention.

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American Ivy Society

www.ivy.org

'Eva'. This variegated Bird's Foot ivy has three forward-pointed lobes, with the terminal lobe up to twice as long as the laterals. The variegation is a cream to white margin with a green-gray center. The leaves are arranged close on the stem. It is self-branching, but light pruning produces more branching. This versatile ivy does well as a houseplant and can be used in all types of topiary. For best color, 'Eva' must be grown in good sunlight; in lower light levels, the variegation may fade to pale green.

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

www.ascfg.org

'Uproar Rose' (Goldsmith Seeds, www.goldsmithseeds.com). Presented with the fresh cut flower award, zinnia 'Uproar Rose' was the highest-rated cultivar in the 2008 seed trials. Its consistent magenta-rose color, high degree of doubleness and large flower size made this a favorite with growers

across the country. It was called a "standout in the field" for its heavy yield on strong 30-inch stems. For those growing zinnias in the north, one planting may be enough for long stems all season. For those in the south, fresh plantings every four weeks will ensure a constant supply of high-quality flowers.

'Coronation Gold'. Winner of the dried cut flower category, achillea 'Coronation Gold' requires little maintenance and is productive, with division, for several years. Flowers are easily dried and hold their yellow color indefinitely. The strong stems allow them to be easily used in dried arrangements. Fresh cut flowers can last more than a week; be sure to change the water in buckets frequently if storing in the cooler.

'Hamburg'. This hydrangea features dark blue-purple petals that fade to red. This woody cut flower of the year is good for drying and preserving. Its petals are popular when harvested blue and equally popular these days when the flowers age to a mix of green, blue and pink known

as "antiques." Vase life will be six to eight days when harvested early in the season and 10 to 12 days when the antiques are harvested later.



Clockwise from left: Physostegia 'Crystal Peak'; Hydrangea 'Hamburg'; Achillea 'Coronation Gold'

who know a thing or two about hardscapes.



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Top right: Sanvitalia 'Million Suns'. Bottom right: Hakonechloa 'Aureola' (Photo: Steven Still)



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Fleuroselect

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'Mesa Yellow' (PanAmerican Seed, www.panamseed.com). Winning its second award this year, gaillardia 'Mesa Yellow' impressed Fleuroselect judges with its beauty and abundance of novel, yellow flowers. For retailers, the value lies in its bright-yellow flowers, which draw attention to the plant; in the pot, it appears compact and well-branched forming an attractive display in the garden centers. Consumers will be delighted with its drought tolerance once the plant is established. Its long flowering season is a definite plus.

'Crystal Peak' (Ernst Benary Samenzucht, www.benary.com). This eye-catching new physostegia fits into the popular, modern range of annual flowering container perennials. 'Crystal Peak' demonstrated outstanding compactness and uniformity in both pack and garden trials, and the judges were particularly impressed with its earliness. The abundance of stunning white flowers is a definite advantage, and the variety can be offered as an attractive specimen plant in mixed containers. For consumers, the self cleaning of the old flowers makes garden maintenance easier.

'Million Suns' (Dittmar Samen und Pflanzen). This sanvitalia has

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been recognized for its abundance of nicely formed, golden-yellow flowers. Judges found the variety to show exceptional compactness, excellent basal branching and a longer flowering period, impressing from May to the first frost. The variety is a low-maintenance, resilient garden and patio performer. The golden flowers shine out in pots, containers and borders.

Perennial Plant Association

www.perennialplant.org

'Aureola'. *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola', also known as golden hakone grass, is a long-season ornamental grass that may be used as a ground cover, a border-front specimen, a mass planting or in a patio container. The plant offers vivid highlights in shaded areas or in evening gardens. This grass is also noted for its movement in breezes, offering a cascading behavior. Hardy to Zones 5 to 9, golden hakone grass grows best in moist, humus rich, well-drained soil. This grass requires little maintenance, other than cutting the dead leaves back in late winter or early spring.

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

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