

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

	University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment Cooperative Extension Service
	extension.ca.uky.edu HORTICULTURE EDUCATION Annette Meyer Heisdorffer, PhD Daviness County Extension Office

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AAS Winners Are Gifts to Gardeners

What a gift for gardeners! The All-American Section Winners are the flowers or vegetables that have improved characteristics released by breeders and companies for testing. Usually, these are featured in the “what is new” section of a catalog or online site.

All-American Selections® is a non-profit organization which has conducted tests across the United States since 1932, and introduced significantly improved flowering ornamentals (bedding plants) grown from seed or by cuttings. They also trial edibles such as fruits and vegetables grown from seed that have unique and improved qualities.

How do you know the plant is a winner? The All-American Selections® Winners symbol has the AAS in a circle with “Winner” on a red banner. For 2024, there are five National Ornamental or Flower Winners and two National Vegetable Winners.

An Ornamental Winner from seed is Celosia Burning Embers (*Celosia plumosa*). The leaves on this annual are bronze in color with dark pink veins which adds additional color to the landscape. The plume-shaped flowers are a brilliant dark-reddish pink. Many flowers are produced by the plant from late spring to frost. Deadheading flowers is not necessary. Burning

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Embers is a compact plant 8-9 inches tall making it perfect to edge the front of the garden or border. Space the plants 12 inches apart. This plant is also suited for growing in containers. Celosia prefers full sun and well-drained soil. It tolerates heat and humidity. Pollinators will love it too.

Impatiens interspecific Solarscape® XL Pink Jewel F1 (*Impatiens hybrida*) is another Ornamental Winner from seed. The vivid pink flowers with a satiny texture are 2.5-2.7 inches across. They cover the plant from late spring to frost. Deadheading the flowers is not required. The medium green leaves are produced on a mounding plant which reaches 11-13 inches tall with a spread of 18-20 inches. Space plants 16-18 inches apart in the ground as a medium height divider for other plants. Group several plants together for best effect. It also performs well in containers and hanging baskets. The plant grows in sun or shade and prefers well-drained soil. This one is disease resistant to impatiens downy mildew.

Geranium Big EEZE Pink Batik (*Pelargonium x interspecific*) is an Ornamental Winner from vegetative cuttings. Pink Batik has uniform flowers with varying shades of pink on the petals forming a mosaic pattern. The 4-5 inch flower clusters are produced on 18-inch-tall plants. The dark green leaves make an attractive background for the flowers. Flowers are produced from late spring to frost. The plant performs best if the spent flowers are deadheaded. Space plants 24 inches apart in the ground to use as a background for smaller plants. It is perfect for containers. It prefers to grow in full to partial sun in well-drained soil.

Petchoa EnViva™ Pink (*Petunia x Calibrachoa hybrida*) is another Ornamental Winner from cuttings. The petchoa resulted from a cross between pentunia and calibrachoa. This annual

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is covered from spring through frost with 2–3-inch bright pink flowers with a yellow throat in the center. It reaches 10-16 inches tall and wide. No deadheading required. Plant them 18-24 inches apart in the ground as a medium height divider forming a ground cover. Also enjoy it in containers and hanging baskets. It prefers to grow in full sun and well-drained soil. Heat, wind, and rain tolerance make it a nice garden plant.

A final Flower Winner from seed is Marigold Siam Gold F1 (*Tagetes erecta*). This annual has golden-yellow double blossoms 3-4 inches across produced on sturdy stems making it a great cut flower. Numerous flowers are produced from late spring to frost. The uniform, compact plant with green leaves reaches 18-20 inches tall. The plant tolerates drought, heat, and rain. Space plants 16-20 inches apart in the garden as a focal point or medium height divider for other plants. Deadheading benefits the plant. Best to grow in full sun and well-drained soil. Flowers may be dried and used in dried arrangements.

An Edible Vegetable Winner is Broccoli Purple Magic F1 (*Brassica oleracea*). A unique characteristic is that its head is purple on a green background. The leaves are green, but the main stalk and stems are purple too. The tight dome shaped heads can be eaten raw or cooked. The flavor of the broccoli is described as sweeter and very tender compared to the usual green broccoli. Overall plant height reaches 30 inches tall and spreads 20 inches wide. Heads are ready to harvest in 100 days from seeds and 90 days from transplant. It is easy to grow. It is best grown in spring or fall during cool weather but will tolerate heat and stress. The plant requires full sun and well-drained soil.

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Another Edible Vegetable Winner is Pepper Red Impact F1 (*Capsicum annuum*). It is sweeter than other varieties. The fruits are harvested green or red. The thick-walled, large fruits are about 6-8 inches long and weigh about 9 ounces. The approximate days to harvest are 75 after transplanting into the garden. The plant reaches 28-36 inches tall and spreads 16-24 inches and may require staking. Plants require full sun and well-drained soil.

For more information about AAS Winners, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or email annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu.

Annette's Tip:

Recycle fresh-cut Christmas trees by leaving them curbside for city sanitation pickup January 2-6. Another option is to take to Northwest Fisheries Office at 1398 Hwy 81 N., Calhoun to use for fish habitat.

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