

Look for the *Magnificent Seven* in 2011— coming soon. Such an announcement might cause seasoned gardeners to think Hollywood is remaking that great classic western movie from 1960 featuring seven gunfighters hired to defend an oppressed Mexican peasant village. Although it is one of my favorite flicks from days gone by, I am actually announcing the *Magnificent Seven* AAS Winners for 2011.

AAS, short for All-American Selections, is also one of my favorites. In fact, I strongly encourage all gardeners to make AAS one of their favorites. This great gardening organization, much older than that classic western movie, is the oldest independent plant testing organization in North America. It had its beginnings in 1932. As in the past, the goal of AAS is to promote new garden seed varieties with superior garden performance. Such a goal is accomplished through a network of trial grounds throughout North America where only new varieties of flower and vegetables are grown from seed and their performances assessed by skilled, impartial judges. Those with the best performances make the winners' list.

AAS recently announced the Magnificent Seven for 2011. Four are flowers and three are vegetables. They are Viola '*Shangri-La Marina*', Gaillardia '*Arizona Apricot*', Ornamental Kale '*Glamour Red*', Salvia '*Summer Jewel Red*', Pumpkin '*Hijinks*', Tomato '*Lizzano*' and Tomato '*Terrenzo*'. I share with you highlights of each. For more complete information, I encourage readers to visit the All-America Selections website at www.all-americaselections.org Not only will you discover more exciting information about each of these winners, but you can also find out the location of the various trial grounds and the criteria on which the plants are judged.



Viola '*Shangri-La Marina*' is an early-flowering viola with one-inch colorful blossoms. The petals are light blue with a velvety dark blue face. The plant is low growing with a mounding habit.

Gaillardia '*Arizona Apricot*' is a compact plant reaching twelve inches in height. Just 105 days after sowing seed, it flowers with three-inch, daisy-like flowers that transition from bright yellow edges to a deep rich apricot center.





Ornamental Kale '*Glamour Red*' is the first winning kale in seventy-eight years. Bright, shiny, fringed leaves surround brilliant ten-to-twelve inch flower heads.

Salvia '*Summer Jewel Red*' was consistently rated superior for its generous, brilliant red flower spikes. It blooms continuously from spring to autumn on tidy, twenty-inch plants. The bright red flowers are a magnet to hummingbirds.



Pumpkin '*Hijinks*' produces small pumpkins (6 to 7 pounds) that feature a classy, deep-orange skin with distinctive grooves. Gardeners can expect high yields with this pumpkin.

Tomato '*Lizzano*' is the first late, blight-tolerant, cherry-fruited, semi-determinate variety on the market. This variety is excellent for growing in patio containers or hanging baskets.



Tomato '*Terrenzo*' is also a cherry tomato. This determinate bush variety produces a bountiful harvest of very sweet tomatoes. With a plant height of only sixteen to twenty inches, it, too, is a perfect plant for containers or hanging baskets.

Although these magnificent seven will not be showing up soon on your local silver screen, you should be able to find them at your local nursery and garden centers. Most of the mail-order seed catalogs, soon arriving in your mail, should also feature these winners. For an almost certain guarantee of success, I encourage gardeners to grow All-American Selections winners. You cannot go wrong.

In the meantime, stay tuned. In late January, AAS will be adding to the *Magnificent Seven*. Who knows? Hollywood might also consider a remake of the *Magnificent Seven* in 2011. I'd like that.