

Yard and Garden – 01-31-2015 – Ted Griess/Extension Horticulture Assistant

Every year it happens. On nearly a daily basis a profusion of new mail-order seed-catalogs arrive in the mail. For most gardeners, receiving these catalogs with their brightly colored pages delivers excitement and offers solace against the bleakness of winter. Each catalog touts a number of new varieties destined to wow. Furthermore, many times they promise to make you the envy of your gardening friends.

Although I'm not proud to admit it, over the years, I've occasionally fallen prey to those ads. After ordering and planting, I discovered that some truthfully delivered what was promised; however, sadly, a number dished out nothing more than disappointment. With so many options from which to choose, deciding on what plants to grow can be confusing. Perhaps you feel that you, too, have been duped in a similar manner and are wondering whom we can trust. To that, I strongly suggest, AAS.

AAS is an acronym for *All-America Selections*, an independent, non-profit gardening organization that has eighty-three years of reliable promise behind its name. The mission statement of AAS is and has always been "*To promote new garden seed varieties with superior garden performance judged in impartial trials in North America.*"

In 1932 a southern seedsman by the name of Ray Hastings, realized that gardeners in the United States knew little about new garden varieties and had few resources to obtain trustworthy information. Ray proposed the idea of *All-America Selections*. AAS is now an international network of trial grounds throughout North America where new flower and vegetable varieties are grown and exposed to assorted climates and growing conditions. The performance of each new introduction is evaluated by skilled and impartial judges. Judges look for plants that perform exceptionally well and display significantly improved qualities. Those with the best garden performance make what's called the AAS winners list.

Interestingly, AAS has a network of nearly 200 dedicated display gardens. These gardens provide the public an opportunity to view the newest AAS winners in an

attractive, well-maintained setting. On East Campus of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln is located Nebraska's Backyard Farmer AAS display garden. During the summer months, the public is encouraged to visit the Backyard Farmer display garden at no charge. The Backyard Farmer



display garden provides educational programs about the ASS trialing and the award process.

Years of gardening experience has taught me that although a certain plant looks good in a catalog, it may not necessarily perform well, especially when planted in Central Nebraska. Being familiar with the growing habits and requirements of a plant should be a prerequisite before purchasing or planting. Unfortunately, that involves study and a significant amount of time. Such research has been conducted with those plants designated as AAS winners. As of January 26, 2015, AAS is proud to announce 25 winners for the 2015 gardening season. Check them out at www.aaswinners.com

When perusing your new seed catalogs, you might ask, how do I know if it is on the AAS winners list? The answer is simple. Look for those plants that have the AAS logo printed alongside the plants description. For years, AAS has used the red, white and blue shield logo as their symbol of quality. Whether a featured plant is a new variety or one that's been around for some time, if it carries the AAS logo, it truly has the potential to deliver wow and to make you the envy of your gardening friends.

By the way, in 2012, AAS changed its logo from the red, white and blue shield. Attached are a number of AAS logos as they've evolved over years. All symbolize quality.



1940's



1950's



1960's



1970's



1980's to 2011



Current Logo