

If one were to make an alphabetical list of flowers from A to Z, zinnia would typically be near, if not at the end of the list. Although the first letter in the word zinnia begins with Z, if I were asked to make such a list, I would immediately change its name to “A-zinnia.” By so doing, it would place its name near the top, a position I feel it firmly

deserves. My reasons include the following: zinnias are beautiful flowers; zinnias exhibit great diversity in shape, color, form and size; zinnias are very easy to grow from seed; zinnias require little maintenance; zinnias are inexpensive to grow; zinnias make excellent cut flowers;



zinnias attract butterflies; zinnias are deer resistant; zinnias bloom from early summer until frost (with proper deadheading); and zinnias have won multiple All-America Selections® awards.



As a young boy, I distinctly remember my mother growing zinnias. I often would help her plant zinnias at the borders of her vegetable garden. Throughout the summer not only did they add a bright touch of color to her vegetable garden, but they also provided a bounty of beautiful cut flowers for our home. Later in life, when I began growing my own vegetables, I always planted zinnias at the end of the rows. Rita and I continue that tradition to this day.

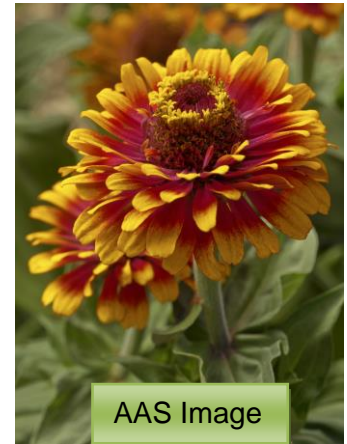
Zinnia is the genus to which a dozen or more species belong. Two species are regularly grown in home gardens. Both species are annuals, and as mentioned earlier, bloom from early summer through the first frosts of autumn.

The most common species of zinnia is *Zinnia elegans*. This species is an old garden favorite originally from Mexico and, thus, a warm climate plant. It features upright bushy plants with lance-shaped roughly textured leaves. *Elegans* range in height from six inches to as tall as three or more feet. Many flower forms exist including single, semi-double and double. Colors range from red, yellow, orange, pink, rose, lavender, green and white. One might say zinnias are available in just about every color except blue. This species of zinnia makes an excellent cut flower. This was the species that mother always grew, and one we often grow. Chris and Pat Dolan's yard in Minden showcases a beautiful *Zinnia elegans* garden.



an annual bed.

In the last few decades, many newer varieties of the *elegans* species have been developed. One is a dwarf hybrid variety called 'Magellan,' and in 2005, the Zinnia 'Magellan Coral' was the All-America Selections® flower award winner. The Magellan series introduced fully double, petal-packed beauties reaching five inches wide on neat, well-branched little plants scarcely more than a foot high. Today the series includes colors of cherry, pink, orange, ivory, yellow scarlet and the AAS – winning coral. The Magellan series is perfect for the front of



In 2006 Zinnia 'Zowie! Yellow Flame' was the AAS flower award winner. 'Zowie! Yellow Flame' was the first semi-tall zinnia with a unique bicolor pattern. Each bloom flames with a scarlet-rose center and yellow petal edges.



Zinnia agustifolia may be less common in gardens, but is gaining in popularity. The plants have narrower foliage and smaller flowers appearing in single or double form. The variety 'Crystal White' was the first of the *agustifolia* species to receive the All-America Selections award in 1997. Crystal white offers pure white blooms with yellow centers. Since then, numerous varieties within this species have received the coveted AAS award. This year the variety Zinnia 'Profusion Double Hot Cherry'



was the 2013 AAS bedding plant award winner.

If you haven't grown zinnias, I urge you to do so. For all the reasons mentioned, I think zinnia should be at the top of any flower list. Although the word zinnia starts with the letter Z, placing it near the end of the alphabet, its track record shows a number of AAS awards, surely placing Zinnia on the A List.

Note:

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