

All American Flower Selections

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Release: Week of December 25, 2024

It will soon be time to move from visions of sugar plums to visions of spring plants. For this, I like to check out the new All-America Selections for each year. For 2024, there are some interesting annual flowers for adding color to garden beds and containers.

All-America Selections is an independent non-profit organization that tests new, never-before-sold varieties for the home garden. After a full season of anonymous trialing by volunteer horticulture professionals, only the top garden performers are given the AAS Winner award designation.

While this year's selections may not be readily available as transplants, unless you order seed and grow your own transplants, watching for the AAS designation in catalogs or on plant tags can help in selecting plants that do well. As long as they're planted in the right location and provided correct care.

Here are the flower selections for 2024. As annuals, they will begin to bloom about one month or less after planting and bloom up until frost for season long color.

One of this year's selections is a petchoa which is a cross between Calibrachoa and petunia. EnViva™ Pink petchoa has bright pink flowers with a yellow throat on a plant with mounding growth habit. Plants need full sun, are heat tolerant, and bounce back well after rainfall or overhead irrigation.

Sure Shot™ petunia has white blooms that cover the plants, attracting bees and other pollinators to lightly fragrant blossoms. Like all petunias, they bloom best with full sun and are tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions. If you've had issues with geranium budworm eating petunia blossoms so they fail to flower despite healthy foliage, it might be best to avoid growing petunias for a few years.

Siam Gold Marigold has golden flowers that are globe-like and fully double with tight heads. The 3 to 4-inch blooms grow on sturdy stems and are held above the foliage for a striking display. The plant grows up to 20 inches tall and has mounded foliage. Flowers are excellent for cutting and arranging.

Siam Gold is an F1 hybrid. An important thing to know is if you save seed from a hybrid, the new plants grown will not be exactly the same as the plant seed was saved from. And if you are planting for pollinators, flowers listed as double and having tight heads make it difficult for pollinators to find pollen and nectar. Single, more open flowers are preferred for pollinator habitats.

Burning Embers Celosia has bronze foliage with dark pink veins that contrast nicely with pink flower plumes. Plants are well-branched and produce more flowers over a longer time compared to other Celosia. Burning Embers does well in full sun and with heat and humidity.

Big EEZE Geranium is a series known for its superior container performance, medium vigor, and heat tolerance. Pink Batik is the newest Big EEZE addition to the series and an AAS selection for this year. Blossom color is pink mosaic making them appear like fabric produced through batik. Flowers are various shades of pink with white striations. Judges noted that numerous flowers were produced. Again, be aware geranium budworm will attack these flower buds too.

If you need an annual flower for part sun or shade, use Impatiens. The AAS selection for 2024 is Solarscape® XL Pink Jewel F1. It has vibrant pink flowers on 13-inch tall plants and can be grown from seed. Solarscape has superior disease resistance, especially to impatiens downy mildew. It's a good plant to use massed in beds or borders and does well in containers placed in shady or part sun locations.