

New and Newer

This is the week the catalogs come: it is also the week some gardeners want to ease out from under all the holiday chores. The timing can't be coincidental, do you think? Several of the 2012 introductions reflect the popularity of container gardening. For example, one of the most satisfactory plants for hanging baskets or containers has been 'million bells', *Calibrachoa*.

Proven Winners has added *C. Superbells* 'Sweet Tart' to the million bells array. This one has soft pink flowers with a large yellow eye zone. It is happy in sunny baskets or window boxes and best of all, it can be allowed to dry out between waterings. Another enticing *Superbells* is 'Cherry Star'. The bright cherry flower is 'starred' with five clear gold lines. Although they are grown as annuals these tropical plants would probably be perennials in a sunny sunroom?

Large gardens are labor intensive, a fact that has busy families searching for smaller plants for the smaller areas they plan to devote to plants. *Hydrangeas* spell summertime for many gardeners but traditionally they require space! The introduction of the Endless Summer collection was a boon for smaller gardens and there is a new Endless Summer hydrangea, 'Belle Anna'.

It has large blooms of a deep pink that begin in early summer and continue until fall in a plant that is an adaptable three feet tall. Its favored status is secured as it grows with minimal care in part shade or sun. Another four-foot hydrangea is *H. involucrate* 'Blue Bunny' unaffected by soil acidity and the lacecap blue flowers are tipped in white. Best of all, it blooms from mid-summer until fall.

Developed at NC State by Dr. Tom Ranney, *H. arborescens* 'Invincibelle Spirit' is a pink 'Annabelle'. It grows three to four feet tall and the plump balls rebloom all season. We may know several of the same cultivar have more impact, but it is hard to resist trying one of each such as 'Star Gazer', 'All Summer Beauty', or 'Starlight'.

With foliage of every imaginable color and design, you may think there is not a coleus you have not seen but *Solenostemon scutellarioides* 'Wasabi' is entirely, solidly brilliant unfading chartreuse.. When this color is needed gardeners have used the sweet potato vine, but this plant can be handy when you want a plant that stays put.

When first introduced, using roses as ground covers seemed out of character for such an esteemed plant. But newly short and blessedly disease resistant low growing roses are in demand by busy gardeners. You will see a new color in 2012, *Rosa* 'Apricot Drift' and a perennial favorite, a white rose 'Icy Drift'.

Drift roses are a cross between full-size ground cover roses and miniatures. They have the toughness and disease resistance from the ground cover genes and the repeat blooming and small size of the miniatures. As well as along walkways, these roses could create a garden in a container for a small patio.

Always eagerly awaited is the AARS Winner and for 2012 their only selection is 'Sunshine Daydream', a *Grandiflora* of great vigor and bloom production. A light yellow, it will grow to five or six feet with a spread of four to five feet. It was developed by Meilland International in France, the rose establishment that produced 'Peace'.

The All-America Rose Selections is a non-profit association that manages a nation wide testing program. Testing programs and awards are helpful guides when choosing plants but the greatest guarantee of success is talking to local plant-people about what grows well here. Most of their answers will include natives and native-derived plants.

Postscript

A reader told me she had little appetite for roasted phragmites, suggested as a way of reducing the numbers of this invasive reed. I wonder would she try Asian carp. In the 1970s a carp native to China escaped from Southern fish hatcheries and is now found in much of the Mississippi Basin and officials and scientists are determined to stop this invasion before it reaches the Great Lakes. Along with mesh fences and electric barriers some states are paying fishermen to catch the bony fish. The problem is developing a market for this truly tasty, rich in protein fish, despite shoppers' reluctance to try it. A large Illinois processor bought 20 million pounds last year; much of it was minced for domestic use or exported.