



# Classic City Garden Awards Series:

## **2014's Best New Plants** from the Trial Gardens at the University of Georgia



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The Trial Gardens at the University of Georgia were established in 1982 by Dr. Allan Armitage and Dr. Michael Dirr. In July of 2013, Dr. John Ruter took over as director of the Trial Gardens (Figure 1). The mission of the Trial Gardens continues to include teaching, research, and new plant introductions. The gardens are an essential trialing site for heat and humidity tolerance for many of the world's annual and perennial ornamental breeding companies, due to the number of days (between 50-60) reaching  $\geq 90$  degrees F.



Figure 1. Director of the Trial Gardens at UGA and Allan Armitage Endowed Professor of Horticulture, Dr. John Ruter.

Teaching programs in the garden focus around two classes taught by Dr. Ruter: HORT 3500, which is taught during the fall semester and emphasizes annuals, vines, and fall-blooming perennials, and HORT 3510, which is taught in the spring and emphasizes bulbs, spring ephemerals, and early-flowering perennials. Both classes are taught as half-semester courses. The Trial Gardens are also utilized by classes from the departments of Agricultural Communication, Entomology, Landscape Architecture, Plant Pathology, and others from the arts and science disciplines.



The research and trialing garden works with over 20 of the major ornamental breeding companies from around the world. In 2014, the Trial Gardens evaluated over 800 annual taxa via in-ground beds, hanging baskets, and containers. Trials also include numerous perennials and 180 landscape roses. Overall, there are approximately 2,000 different taxa growing on less than three-quarters of an acre (Figure 2). Several plants have been introduced to the trade through the garden over the past 20 years (see [ugatrial.hort.uga.edu](http://ugatrial.hort.uga.edu)). The tradition continues as Dr. Ruter releases plants from his ornamental breeding program at UGA.



Figure 2. An aerial image of the Trial Gardens at UGA. The area depicted in this photograph is roughly three-quarters of an acre and houses 2,000 trial plants seasonally.

## Trial Establishment And Data Collection

Seed of slower-growing crops such as begonias and geraniums are received and sown during January, with most other seed crops sown in February and March. Cuttings for propagation are generally received during the first two weeks of March. Propagules are transplanted into 3.75-inch containers and grown in the greenhouse using standard cultivation protocols. Growing substrate is a custom mix from OldCastle Lawn and Garden. Hanging baskets that are made from recycled newspaper (Western Pulp, OR) are also planted and grown-out during this time. In-ground trial beds are rototilled in March-April, and appropriate soil amendments are added based on soil tests. In-ground beds are irrigated with drip irrigation placed on top of the bed and covered with pine straw mulch before planting. Pelargoniums and cold-tolerant annuals such as petunias and calibrachoas are placed in the garden at the end of April, with all other plants going out during the month of May. Plants are liquid-fed during the growing season using several different fertilizer products.



Data collection begins in June and is taken every two weeks until the end of September. All data is taken by Meg Green, Trial Gardens supervisor. A single evaluator is essential for consistency in data collection. Data is entered into Excel (on a tablet) in the garden, and then it is uploaded to the Trial Gardens' website (ugatrial.hort.uga.edu). Plants are rated on a scale of 1-5 (5 being best) on overall vigor, appearance, flower production, and pest resistance. All evaluation data can be found on the Trial Gardens' website, which graphically tracks each variety being evaluated (Figure 3). Graphing of performance data by date is important as it shows how the plant performed from early summer until fall. Data is also shared with the National Trials Database (see www.planttrials.org).



**The Trial Gardens at UGA**  
Research, Teaching and Crop Introduction


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We welcome you to The Gardens at UGA. The Gardens trials the newest varieties of annuals from all over the world and puts perennials to the test to find those that stand up to southeastern heat and humidity. The Gardens at UGA is open all year and is a great source of ideas and information for students, gardeners, and industry professionals. We invite you to visit.

**What's New: Important dates to remember:**




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The performance ratings are based on number of flowers, leaf color, uniformity of habit and flower, resistance to insects and diseases and overall appearance.




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Figure 3. Screenshot of the Trial Gardens at UGA homepage, located at ugatrial.hort.uga.edu.



During the third week of June each year, ornamental breeders and growers are invited to attend the industry open house. Two weeks later, there is a public open house. These events allow industry professionals and the gardening public to see a variety of plants all growing at the same location. During each event, attendees are asked to select five outstanding plants in the garden as favorites. This data is collected and shared on the website and through email communications.

Every week, 10-12 plants are selected as “Plants of Distinction” for their extraordinary performance in the garden. These plants the season’s end, the “Classic City Awards” are given to the 10 plants that exhibited excellent performance all summer. The best cultivars for each genus are also listed under the “Best of the Best” link on the website.

In this publication, we will showcase the plants that were awarded the “Classic City Award” in 2014.



## Classic City Award Winners For 2014

### *Angelonia* 'Archangel Dark Rose'

— Ball FloraPlant



*Angelonia* 'Archangel Dark Rose' was in full flower for the entire 2014 summer in Athens, Georgia. It started out early by out-flowering its *Angelonia* competitors and remained strong through the hottest temperatures. These annual plants are compact and sturdy, growing 24-inches tall. They produce lovely deep, dark rose-colored flowers on multi-stemmed plants.

### *Calibrachoa* 'Superbells Frost Fire'

— Proven Winners



*Calibrachoa* varieties were a bit slow to flower in early summer 2014, likely due to cooler than normal temperatures; however, once the flowering began, it was profuse. 'Superbells Frost Fire' outshone other *Calibrachoa* plants, producing countless white flowers with a yellow eye. These annual plants remained compact with short internodes, ample foliage, and profuse flowers, while *Calibrachoa* competitors became spindly and scraggly late in the summer.



## ***Catharanthus Cora*<sup>™</sup> series**

— Syngenta



The Trial Gardens tested 14 colors of the Cora series of *Catharanthus* in the summer of 2014, and all performed very well. These annual plants were consistent in height, at 12-18 inches, and flowered continually until frost. All tolerated the heat, humidity, and irregular rains. The Cora's have rightfully earned high marks by being flawless all summer and into the fall.

## ***Coreopsis 'Sunshine Suzie'* PPAF**

— Proven Winners

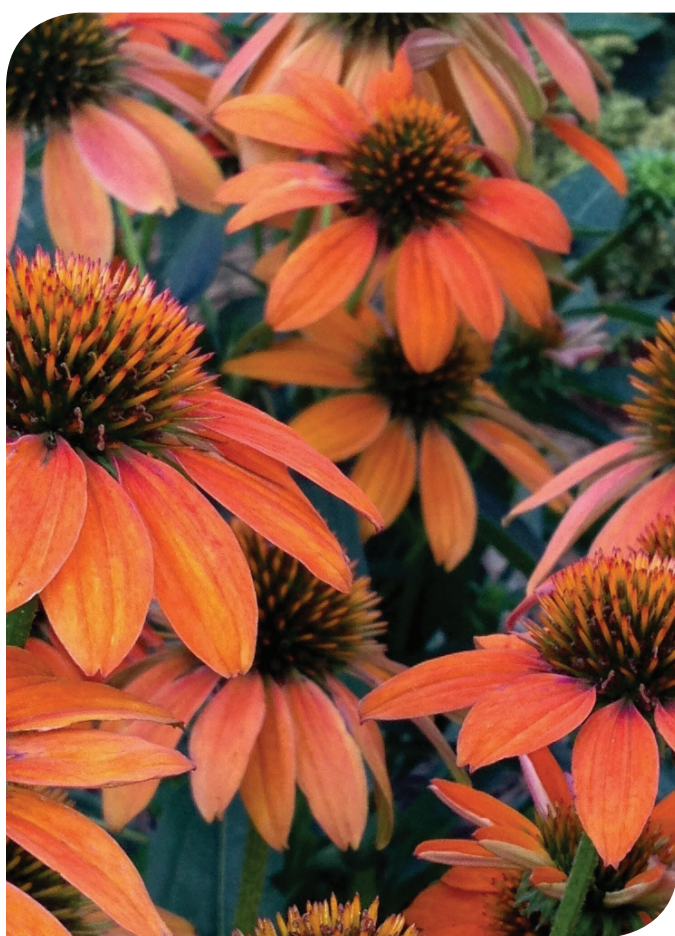


'Sunshine Suzy' is not a loud plant that begs for attention. Instead, it is more of a quiet surprise that greets gardeners all summer and fall. The perennial plants were compact (18- to 24-inches tall and wide), but they were also airy and constantly produced nickel-sized yellow flowers. Month after month, 'Sunshine Suzy' excelled in Georgia's summer heat.



## *Echinacea* 'Sombrero Adobe Orange'

— Darwin Perennials



The Sombrero™ series as a whole has performed well in the Trial Gardens. 'Sombrero Adobe Orange' has completely wowed us with its extraordinary beauty, and it had less powdery mildew than other *Echinacea* cultivars. The plants produced numerous, large, bright-orange flowers throughout the summer. This cultivar flowered longer than any *Echinacea* we have ever trialed. It is truly a spectacular perennial plant.

## *Euphorbia* 'Star Dust Super Flash'

— Red Fox



When many think of *Euphorbia*, they automatically think of poinsettias. However, in the last 10 years, many new species of *Euphorbia* have been introduced into the market, with the goal of developing outstanding garden annuals capable of season long flowering. One species is *E. hypericifolia*, of which the well-known cultivar 'Diamond Frost' (PP 17,567) belongs to. In recent years, we have trialed several cultivars of this species (as well as other *Euphorbia* species), and all have been completely maintenance-free, beautiful, profuse bloomers. *Euphorbia* 'Star Dust Super Flash' (PP 15,120) is no exception and a fine improvement to 'Diamond Frost.' After establishing itself in a container, this *Euphorbia* produced endless white flowers and attained a size of 18-inches tall x 24-inches wide. Its habit is carefree, spilling its flowers over the edges of containers. As temperatures dropped in the fall, this cultivar went into overdrive, producing more flowers than leaves, which resulted in a spectacular floral display.



## *Impatiens* 'Bounce Pink Flame' PPAF

— *Selecta*



Early in development, New Guinea Impatiens were bred to be grown in greater sun than traditional *Impatiens* cultivars. Now, growing in the bright Georgia sunshine, these cultivars thrive beyond imagination as the summer's heat attempts to bake them. 2014 was a great year for our New Guinea impatiens. So many cultivars performed extraordinarily well, including the series Big Bounce™ and Bounce™. In particular, 'Bounce Pink Flame' grew tall (24-36 inches) but never lodged despite some very heavy rains. The stems proudly held numerous, bright-pink flowers for visitors to see.

## *Heliopsis* 'Sunstruck' (PP 25,524)

— *Darwin Perennials*



The perennial 'Sunstruck' grew to a mere 6 inches in height in 2014. But don't let its size fool you; its leaves are variegated, and they accentuate the large yellow flowers well. These plants withstood the heat and humidity and performed beautifully, flowering all summer until the first frost.



## *Hibiscus* 'Royal Gems' (PP 11,011)

— Fleming's Flower Fields



As the popularity of *Hibiscus* increases, we have been trialing more and more cultivars. The perennial 'Royal Gems' has been in the Trial Gardens for several years, and it has impressed us each year. This cultivar resists the insect that decimates many other *Hibiscus*, the hibiscus sawfly. 'Royal Gems' produced giant, deep-rosy-pink flowers for several weeks throughout mid-late summer. Its foliage remained a healthy, lush green until frost.

## *Lobularia* 'Bicolor Pink Stream' PPAF

— Danziger



Starting early in the summer of 2014, it was obvious this cultivar was on its way to earning a Classic City Award. Month after month, 'Bicolor Pink Stream' displayed its beauty and perfumed its environment, never surrendering to the Georgia heat like so many older cultivars do. It quickly spread and formed a carpet of pink and white flower clusters on 12- to 16-inch stems. This alyssum is truly an extraordinary annual plant.



## ***Pelargonium* 'Glitterati Ice Queen'**

— *Hort Couture*



'Glitterati Ice Queen' was grown in hanging baskets in the Trial Gardens but remained healthy all summer. This annual geranium produced numerous, orangish-red flowers that were evenly distributed throughout the plants, and thus, creating a lovely mounding appearance.

## ***Petunia* 'Supertunia Morning Glory Charm'**

— *Proven Winners*



*Petunia* 'Supertunia Morning Glory Charm' performed perfectly through the hot 2014 summer. It quickly formed a mound of small violet flowers with a large, white eye. This annual petunia was loaded with a tremendous number of small (quarter-sized) flowers, even during the hottest months of the summer. It never ceased to be a perfect sphere of violet with only bits of green visible until the first frost.

## ***Scaevola* 'Scalora Amethyst'**

— *Westflowers*



This fan flower amazed us with its perfection throughout the 2014 summer. 'Scalora Amethyst' was another cultivar that was obviously a winner from early in the summer. The annual plants easily grew into a 12-inch mat of blue flowers atop its foliage.



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**Annual Publication 116-2**

**October 2015**

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