



Classic City Garden Awards Series:

2016's Best New Plants

from the Trial Gardens at the University of Georgia



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The University of Georgia Trial Gardens were established in 1982 by Dr. Allan Armitage and Dr. Michael Dirr. In July 2013, Dr. John Ruter succeeded co-founder Dr. Armitage as director of the Trial Gardens (Figure 1). The mission of the Trial Gardens continues to include teaching, research, and new plant introductions. The garden is an essential trialing site for heat and humidity tolerance for many of the world's annual and perennial ornamental breeding companies because of the number of days that temperatures reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit and above (between 50 and 60 days annually).



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

The research and trialing garden works with over 20 of the major ornamental breeding companies from around the world. In 2016, the Trial Gardens evaluated more than 750 annual taxa by way of in-ground beds, hanging baskets, and containers (Figure 2). In the last 20 years, several plants have been introduced to the trade through the gardens (www.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

Plants for the Trial Gardens are produced from seeds and cuttings sent to UGA. Seeds 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 4-inch containers and grown in the greenhouse using standard cultivation protocols. Growing substrate is a custom mix from OldCastle Lawn & 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 and April, with appropriate soil amendments 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 calibrachoa, 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 with several different fertilizer products during the growing season.

Data collection begins in June and occurs every two weeks until the end of September. Meg Green, Trial Gardens supervisor, collects all data. A single evaluator is essential for consistency in data collection. Data is entered into Excel (on a tablet) in the garden and is uploaded to the Trial Gardens website (www.ugatrial.hort.uga.edu). Plants are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being best) on overall vigor, appearance, flower production, and pest resistance. All evaluation data can be found on the trial garden web site and is graphically tracked for each variety being evaluated (Figure 3). Performance data is graphed by date to show how the plant performed from early summer until fall. Data is also shared with the National Trials Database (www.plantrials.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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Garden Trials

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.

Each year during the third week of June, ornamental breeders and growers are invited to attend an 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. This data is collected and shared on the web site and through email communication.

Every week, 10 to 12 plants are selected as “Plants of Distinction” for their extraordinary performance in the gardens. These plants are featured on the web site and information about them is emailed to interested parties. At season’s end, the “Classic City Awards” are given to the best 10 plants that exhibited excellent performance all summer. The best cultivars for each genus also are listed under the “Best of the Best” link on the web site.

In this publication, we will showcase the plants that were honored with the Classic City Award in 2016.

Classic City Award Winners For 2016

Caladium

'Bombshell' Classic Caladiums®



Since Robert Hartman of Classic Caladiums has been sending us his fabulous caladiums, we finally have a crop that will survive (and thrive!) in our shadiest, most challenging flowerbeds. There has not been a single variety that has been less than a superior performer. These caladiums have brightened the darkest corners of our garden. 'Bombshell' caladiums perform equally well in the sun, but we desperately need them for the ever-shady areas where nothing will survive.

'Bombshell' really showed off for us beginning in early summer. It grew into a tight, perky mound of deep red, radiating outward to its green-edged pointy leaves. Even late in the summer, 'Bombshell' remained tall and proud, as if it were laughing at the summer's heat.

Calibrachoa

'Cabaret® Lemon Yellow' - Ball FloraPlant



This summer's weather allowed our calibrachoa to flourish. It was a hot and dry summer, but by late July, welcome rains began to fall frequently enough to sustain the garden. The calibrachoa rewarded us with months of flowering cultivars. 'Cabaret® Lemon Yellow' was a crowd favorite at our public open house before being selected as a Classic City Award winner. It was early to grow into a mound of deep green foliage that became covered in deep lemon-yellow flowers. This plant remained in full bloom from the beginning to the end of summer.

Calibrachoa

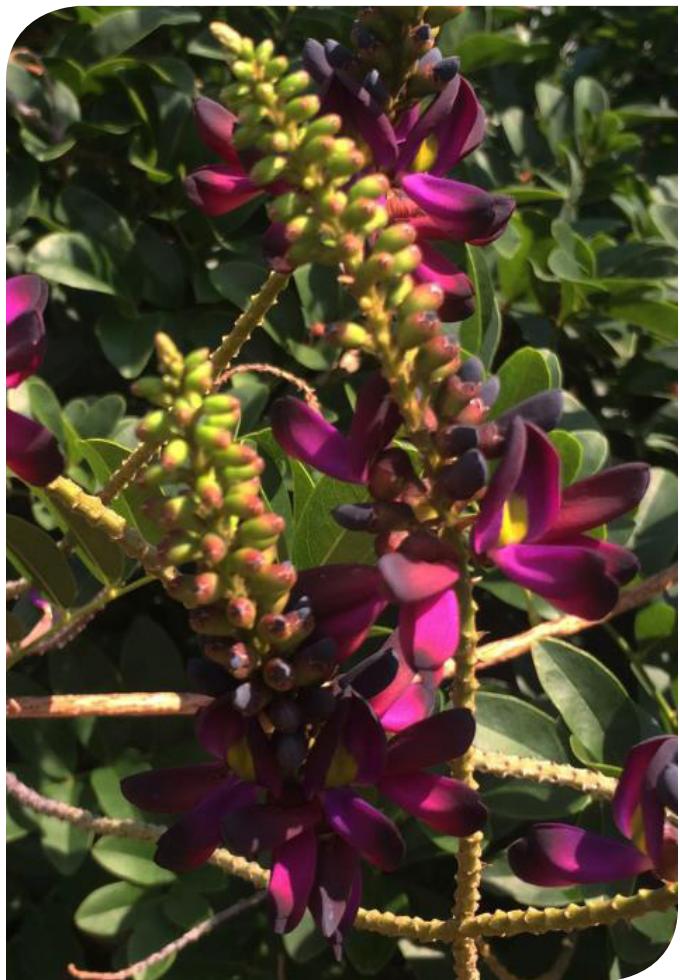
'Calibasket™ Sunny Side' - Westhoff



'Calibasket™ Sunny Side' calibrachoa has been in full bloom for over three months. The plants grew together quickly and wasted no time showing off their superior ability to withstand the most challenging summer weather. The flowers were a clean white with yellow descending deep into their throats. Bees delightfully cover themselves in pollen as they harvest it from the seemingly infinite supply of blooms.

Callerya reticulata

Dr. John Ruter, UGA



A wonderful evergreen vine in warmer climates that is known by the name of "evergreen wisteria," this particular selection came to us from Taiwan and was the only seedling in the batch to survive the 6 F winter low we had a couple of years ago. The single-digit temperatures knocked the foliage off, but it came back the next spring with vim and vigor. Starting midsummer the plant produces numerous 12- to 15-inch racemes of attractive purple flowers with a green spot on the upright banner petal. In China the native range of this plant is from the upper reaches of zone 8 down through zone 11. This is a great vine for late summer color in the garden!

Canna

'Toucan™ Rose' - Proven Winners'



The year 2016 seems to have been the year of the canna. We had over 10 cultivars of the newest and most dwarf cannas, all of which performed excellently. 'Toucan™ Rose' grew quickly and began producing its large rose flowers in no time. The plants grew to heights of 4 to 5 feet and were covered in large deep rose canna flowers. Every week, this canna outshone its neighbors.

Capsicum

'Hot Pops Purple' - PanAmerican Seed



Not only was 'Hot Pops Purple' a popular plant among visitors in our summer trials this year, but its performance was also flawless. The plants were compact, reaching about half of a foot in height and more sprawling than upright. By early summer, these diminutive plants were covered with hundreds of small, perfectly round purple and orange orbs. 'Hot Pops Purple' continued to show off its flair into the fall. This plant richly deserves all accolades it receives.

**Angelonia Combos 'MixMaster™
Summer Bouquet'** - Ball FloraPlant



Since Angelonia first arrived to the Trial Gardens in the late 1990s, it has been a favorite crop of our staff. These plants have been perfected over time to be amongst the most carefree crops to grow.

The combination basket 'MixMaster™ Summer Bouquet' was composed of spreading pink, white, and purple angelonias (Angel Mist® series).

All components grew and flowered consistently, with no one out doing the other. A good balance of the three colors of angelonia was maintained throughout the summer, which is seldom the case.

'MixMaster™ Summer Bouquet' is immensely deserving of this great award.

Solenostemon Combos Confetti Garden 'Trafalgar Square' - Dümmen Orange



We have never had a combos comprised of only coleus, but Confetti Garden 'Trafalgar Square' proved this to be a popular option. This mix of yellow, green, bronze and orange shades blended together to create a stunningly bold statement. The coleus varieties included in this mix grew consistently and appeared uniform throughout the summer. Not one overgrew its space, and all behaved politely. This combo flourished effortlessly from spring through late fall.

Portulaca

'ColorBlast Tangerine' - Westhoff

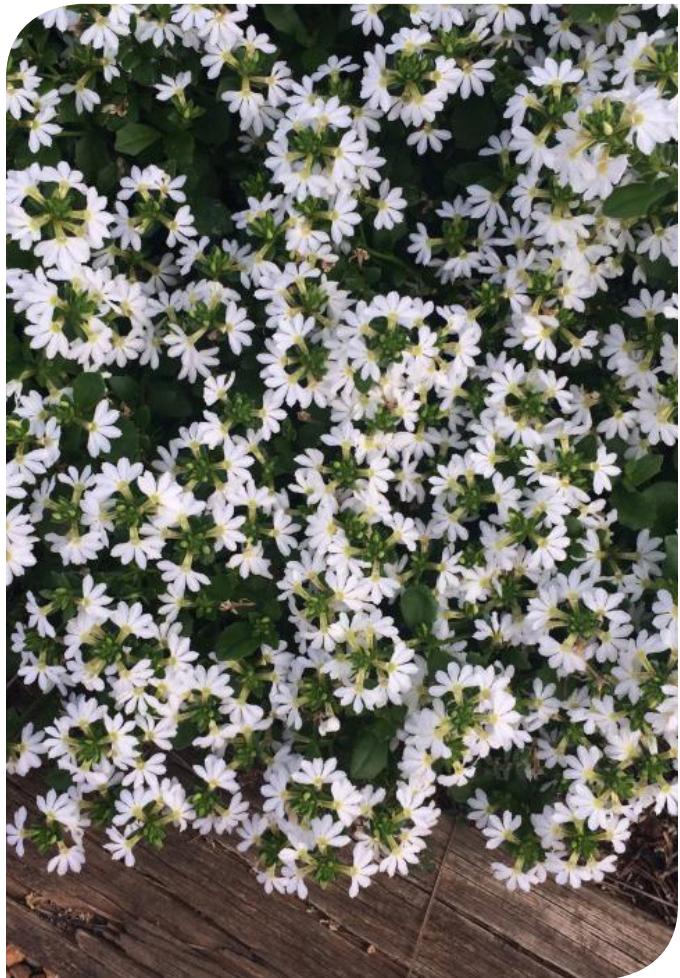


Portulaca 'ColorBlast Tangerine' was the best portulaca that we have had in our trials in decades. It produced countless large deep orange flowers that opened earlier and that remained open longer than other varieties.

'ColorBlast Tangerine' was covered in large, vivid, orange flowers constantly from beginning to end of our 2016 trials. It was an early favorite of our visitors and a superb garden performer.

Scaevola

'Scalora Pearl' - Westhoff



Our scaevola performed fairly well this hot, dry summer; however, many cultivars had withered by September. 'Scalora Pearl' was the lone exception. This ultra-compact, creamy white fan flower grew into a vibrant flowing mound of fan flowers. For months, 'Scalora Pearl' quickly and effortlessly remained in full bloom. It withstood midsummer rain deluges, as well as the drought that was predominant this summer.

List of 2016 Best New Plants

***Angelonia* Combos 'MixMaster™ Summer Bouquet'**
***Caladium* 'Bombshell'®**
***Calibrachoa* 'Cabaret® Lemon Yellow'**
***Calibrachoa* 'Calibasket™ Sunny Side'**
***Callerya reticulata*, Evergreen wisteria**
***Canna* 'Toucan™ Rose'**
***Capsicum* 'Hot Pops Purple'**
***Solenostemon* Combos Confetti Garden 'Trafalgar Square'**
***Portulaca* 'ColorBlast Tangerine'**
***Scaevola* 'Scalora Pearl'**

**Stay tuned for the next publication in this series,
which will feature the Classic City Award winners for 2017.**

Come and visit us in Athens! You'll find the Trial Gardens at UGA behind Snelling Dining Commons, next to the R. C. Wilson Pharmacy Building, near the corner of Sanford Drive and W. Green Street in Athens, Georgia.

ugatrial.hort.uga.edu

extension.uga.edu/publications

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