



ALL AMERICA SELECTION WINNERS FOR 2023

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Each winter the All America Selection (AAS) winners are announced. This non-profit organization has established trial gardens throughout the United States and even as far north as Canada. New varieties, species or strains of annuals, vegetables and bedding plants are grown and judged on their performance. Those chosen as winners are outstanding plants and deserve a trial in your gardens as well.

Bright colors in the garden bring a smile to my face and I'm sure you'll be grinning too as you admire 'Doubleshot Orange Bicolor' snapdragons. Snaps bloom all season long and this one with orangy-red and white double flowers will have heads turning whether out in the garden or brought in as cut flowers. The upright plants reach about 20 inches high, have strong stems that withstand winds and do not need staking. The stunning, double flowers are 1 to 2 inches in size and plants tolerate light frosts so they will continue to bloom well into fall, even if not dead-headed.

Foliage can be colorful too. Coleus 'Premium Sun Coral Candy' is the first seed coleus to receive the AAS winner designation. The narrow, serrated leaves of coral, burgundy and green provide color all season long. Plants are compact and mounded in form only reaching 10 to 16 inches in height. This makes them perfect for containers or for bedding. Grow this coleus in either sun or shade as it holds its color well even in bright, sunny spots.



If you are looking for a tropical touch, try Colocasia ‘Royal Hawaiian Waikiki’. These tuberous plants sport sizable, heart-shaped leaves in a deep green with a creamy white markings and striking pink veins. Stems are a deep burgundy. Plants are clump forming to about 3 feet in height and width and would be absolutely stunning in a container. While tolerant of heat, this plant will reach peak performance when kept well-watered.

For a cooler palette, check out salvia ‘Blue By You’. This perennial is hardy to USDA zone 4b and flowers earlier than many other blue salvias. Blossoms are sought after by pollinators such as butterflies and hummingbirds. Plants were noted for their heat tolerance and winter hardiness. ‘Blue By You’ reaches about 20 inches tall and as long as spent blossoms are removed, it will flower from late spring into late summer.

One other ornamental plant, even though it was a northwest/southeast regional winner and not a national one, that I think would do well in our gardens is echinacea ‘Artisan Yellow Ombre’. Not only are the 4-inch golden yellow blooms attractive to pollinators, but the plants were noted for their tolerance to weather extremes including drought, cold, heat, rain, wind and frost. But the main reason I’d like to give this plant a try is because of its high resistance to botrytis, rusts and downy and powdery mildews.

The last 2 national winners can be planted in the vegetable garden. Kabocha squash ‘Sweet Jade’ produces mature fruits that resemble flattened green pumpkins and weigh in at 1 to 2 pounds. Their shape makes them eminently suitable for stuffing or soup bowls. Judges remarked on ‘Sweet Jade’s’ high yields and long storage capacity. Plants mature about 85 days from seed. The vining plants aren’t overly rambunctious with stems trailing to about 6 to 8 feet. For those who like a touch of heat but don’t want to get burned, jalapeno pepper ‘San Joaquin’ might be up your alley with only 2500-6000 Scoville units. The thick-walled, 4-inch fruits can be picked green or left on the plant to turn a bright red. Plants can produce up to 50 peppers per plant so come up with some creative ways to use your delicious harvest. Seeds should be started indoors about 8 weeks before the last frost date or look for transplants at local garden centers. Grow ‘San Joaquin’ in the garden or in a good sized (5 gallon) container. Like most vegetables, plants do best in full sun and in a moderately fertile, well-drained soil.

Do check out this years and previous year’s AAS winners. They are bound to perform well in your gardens. For all your gardening questions, contact the UConn Home & Garden Education at (877) 486-6271 or www.homegarden.cahnrc.uconn.edu or your local Cooperative Extension Center.