

Floral Notes

By email

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2008 All-America Selections® Flower Winners



The 2008 AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner is **Osteospermum 'Asti White'** developed by Goldsmith Seeds, Inc. 'Asti White' is the first white Cape Daisy produced from seed and features large pure white daisy flowers with blue centers. It is drought tolerant and will bloom and recover from a slight frost. 'Asti White' can be planted in the spring or fall garden and should be placed in full sun. Plants reach about 17-20" tall and wide and the flowers are about 2-2½" in diameter. **Viola 'Skippy XL Plum Gold'**, produced by Kieft Seeds Holland, is the 2008 AAS Cool Season

Award Winner. The flowers have a yellow "whiskered" face surrounded by plum shades. Blooms are small, about 1-1½" in diameter, but the plants have produce numerous open blooms. Plants are 6-8" tall and wide. In our region 'Skippy XL Plum Gold' blooms from spring to the heat of the summer. For more information about All-America Selections visit www.all-americaelections



2007 Greenhouse Tomato Conference

UMass Extension, University of Connecticut Extension System, Northeast SARE

November 13, 2007

Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center
Sturbridge, MA

- 8:15 – 9:00 **Registration** (*Coffee and Danish available*)
- 9:00 – 9:50 **Choosing Varieties of Tomatoes for Greenhouse Production**
Freek Knol, De Ruiter Seeds
- 9:50 - 10:50 **Nutrient and Water Management**
Rich McAvoy, University of Connecticut
- 10:50 – 11:00 **Break**
- 11:00 – 11:45 **Reading Your Plants: Managing Plant Vigor in Grafted Crops**
What to look for in assessing plant development and vigor and tips for either increasing or decreasing plant vigor to improve plant quality and fruit production.
Freek Knol, De Ruiter Seeds
- 11:45 – 1:00 **Catered Lunch** – *Reservations requested by Nov. 7*
- 1:00 – 1:50 **Using Biological Control for Greenhouse Tomatoes**
Carol Glenister, IPM Laboratories Inc, NY
- 1:50 – 2:00 **Break**
- 2:00 – 2:50 **Concurrent Sessions**
- Session A **Hands-on Grafting Workshop**
Rich McAvoy, Jude Boucher, University of Connecticut
Martin Gent, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
- Session B **Disease Identification and Management** (One pesticide recertification hour)
Sharon Douglas, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station
- 3:00 – 3:30 **Cause and Management of Plant Disorders**
John Howell, New England Vegetable Growers Association
- 3:30 – 4:15 **Grower Panel** (Innovative growing, marketing ideas, economics)
Rich Schartner, Schartner Farms, RI, Ryan Voiland, Red Fire Farm, MA, Russ Holmberg, Holmberg Orchards, CT

\$35.00/person (**before November 7th**) or \$40.00/person (**after November 7th**) . Seating is limited. Please register early! Make checks payable to University of Massachusetts and return to: Greenhouse Tomato Program, 203 French Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003

For more information contact:

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Growing and Marketing Green Program

UMass Extension, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System & Northeast SARE

December 14, 2007

Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center, Sturbridge, MA

- 8:15–9:00 **Registration**
- 9:00–9:45 **Organic Certification Requirements** *Don Franczyk, Baystate Organic Certifiers, MA*
- 9:45–10:45 **Principles of Organic Growing Media and Fertilizers for Greenhouse Production**
Douglas Cox, University of Massachusetts
- 10:45–11:00 **Break**
- 11:00–12:00 **Managing Insects and Mites: Biocontrol and Pesticides for Organic Greenhouse Growers**
Dan Gilrein, Cornell Long Island Research & Extension Center
- 12:00–1:00 **Lunch**
- 1:00–1:50 **Concurrent Sessions**
- Session A** **Using Biofungicides for Diseases in the Greenhouse** (One pesticide recertification hour requested) *Wade Elmer, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station*
- Session B** **Growing Green: Choosing and Using Biodegradable Pots**
Bob Luczai, Ball Seed Co., MA
Local Sustainable Biodegradables: Cow Pots™ *Matt Freund, Freund's Farm, CT*
- 1:50 – 2:00 **Break**
- 2:00 – 3:00 **Concurrent Sessions**
- Session A** **Recycling Plastics for Greenhouses and Garden Centers: Film, Containers**
John Bartok, Extension Professor Emeritus, University of Connecticut
Using Biofuels: On-site Biodiesel Production and Use
Don Campbell, Donald Campbell Associates, MA
- Session B** **Marketing Green Panel: Retail Organic Products for Pests, Nutrition and Weeds for Home Gardens**
Dan Gilrein, Cornell Long Island Research & Extension Center, NY, Douglas Cox, University of Massachusetts Randy Prostack, University of Massachusetts, Rob Durgy, University of Connecticut.
- 3:00 – 3:30 **Energy Conservation, Seasonal Thermal Storage, Solar Options**
Don Campbell, Donald Campbell Associates, MA, Joe Geremia, Geremia Greenhouses, CT
- 3:30 – 4:15 **Growing and Marketing Green Panel**
Greenhouse water conservation: *Paul Barnes, Geremia Greenhouses, CT.* Production and marketing: *Sal Gilbertie & Bill Smith, Gilbertie's Herb Gardens Inc., CT, Tim Skehan, Russell's Garden Center, MA*

\$40.00/person. Checks payable to University of Massachusetts, return to Growing and Marketing Green Program, 203 French Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003

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Midsummer Ratings in Field Trials Reveal Ten Great New Plants

Dr. Lois Berg Stack
Extension Specialist Ornamental Horticulture
University of Maine
Orono, ME

Plant trials are important tools. Pack trials provide you with a snapshot of how new plants perform in the greenhouse. That's valuable information for your production process. Field trials, on the other hand, offer a view of how plants perform in the field. That's valuable information too, because it provides an assessment of how your customers see plants.

You might decide to produce a new plant because the catalog photos or pack trial plantings are spectacular, it seems to fill a gap in your product list, and the production protocol fits your facility. But, if that plant doesn't perform well in your customers' gardens, then your customers might go elsewhere next year – to a place where they know that the beautiful plants they buy will look terrific not just on the day of purchase, but also fifteen weeks later in their gardens.

We began field trials of new annual flowers at the University of Maine in 1988. Each year, we obtain seeds or cuttings of new plants, grow them to retail size in the greenhouse, bed them out the first week of June, and maintain them through the season. Our field maintenance includes planting, mulching, irrigating when needed, weeding and periodic fertilizing. This year, our field season had a terrific start: good soil moisture, perfect planting conditions in early June, and good rain for the month of June. July brought warm days and cool nights, which made some plants stall. Our recent hot, humid weather has caused some stress (the ratings below were done just a few days into this high heat and humidity).

We have 93 plants in the 2007 field trials. Our first ratings were done on July 20, about midseason. Here are ten plants that look terrific as of midseason:

Basil 'Pesto Perpetuo' (vegetative; Proven Selections)

This basil produces blue-green leaves with white margin, very tight and prolific branching and an upright habit. To top it off, I haven't seen any flowering yet. For either mixed containers or patio herb pots, this plant provides fragrance and form.



Basil 'Pesto Perpetuo'

Dahlia 'Mystic Illusion' (vegetative; Proven Winners)

At the time I rated the plants, this hadn't flowered yet (it has since produced a few lemon yellow flowers). I was smitten by the shiny purple-black foliage, and neat and uniform habit of the plant.

Juncus pallidus 'Javelin' (seed; PanAmerican Seed)

Like javelins, the leaves of this rush point upward, reaching a height of about 18". They're a good textural foil for more colorful annuals, and have not shown any evidence of disease or pest problems.



Juncus 'Javelin'

Lobelia 'Waterfall Light Lavender' (vegetative; Ball FloraPlant)

Lobelia often has great color in spring, but looks distressed by midsummer. In recent years, several lobelias have performed much better. 'Waterfall Light Lavender' is one of these – its stems trail outward and reached a spread of about 20" by late July. It continues to set new flower buds.

Marigold (African) 'Vanilla' (seed; PanAmerican Seed)

'Vanilla' has the lush dark green foliage and uniform vase-shape habit of many tall marigolds. Plants are topped by 3-4" cream-colored flowers.

Petunia 'Supertunia Raspberry Blast' (vegetative; Proven Winners)

This bold petunia received considerable attention at this spring's pack trials, and it continues to be a favorite in the field. The hot pink broad star center with darker edge may not be for everyone, but in the right mixed container it would be stunning.

Petunia 'Shock Wave' (Ivory, Pink Vein, Purple, Rose) (seed; PanAmerican Seed)

This series has performed very well (as of midsummer, 'Ivory' is my favorite for both color and floriferousness), and is intermediate in both plant spread and flower size between the small calibrachos and the larger spreading petunias. This would be perfect in a smaller mixed basket, in which larger petunias become overwhelming by summer's end.

Sedum 'Lemonball' (vegetative; Proven Winners)

'Lemonball' is a dependable, high quality plant with green-yellow foliage. Its spreading mounded habit is both neat and vigorous. It has not flopped apart in the center, nor has it flowered to date. Its drought tolerance makes it perfect for small terra cotta containers.



Sedum 'Lemonball'

Stipa lessingiana 'Capriccio' (seed; PanAmerican Seed)

'Capriccio' is a cultivar of "Siberian Steppe Grass"; that's a hint that it's probably hardy here in New England. The clumps of leaves reach about 16" in height, and are more finely textured than fescues – the leaves sway gently in the slightest breeze.

Zinnia 'Profusion Knee High Red' and 'Profusion Knee High White' (seed; Ball Seed)

I've been a big fan of the 'Profusion' series, and the new Knee High additions to the series look great. Both the red and white flowered types are uniform, and a bit taller (20") and more open than the standard 'Profusion' zinnias.



Zinnia 'Profusion Knee High'

Organic Regulations for Lawn and Garden Products and Plants

Don Franczyk
Certification Administrator
Baystate Organic Certifiers
Winchendon

What are the National Organic Standards?

The National Organic Standards are U.S. Federal Government standards for the production of crops, livestock, livestock products, and processed products that are intended to be sold as or represented as organic. The USDA/AMS/NOP, known as the National Organic Program, is responsible for administering the standards.

What are certifying agents and what is their role in the certification process?

Any operation producing crops or products to be sold as organic must be certified to the organic standards. The National Organic Program (NOP) does not certify any operations itself. The NOP accredits certifying agents to inspect and verify that operations are in compliance with the organic standards. There are over 100 certifying agents accredited to certify organic operations. Many of them only operate in a single state, many of them are state agencies. Some are for profit, some are not for profit. Baystate Organic Certifiers certifies operations in the Northeast United States. Most of its certified operations are in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Baystate Organic Certifiers is a not for profit certifying agency.

In relation to greenhouse and nurseries, what is covered by the National Organic Standards?

The standards cover all seedling production, nursery plants, bedding plants, greenhouse and hydroponic crops that are sold or represented as organic.

What is not covered by the National Organic Standards?

Fertilizers, compost, potting soil, lawn and garden products, and pest and disease control products may not be certified as organic. Products in this category may be approved for use on organic farms or organic greenhouse operations, but may not be certified themselves. Products in these categories may advertise themselves as organic or natural, but may in actuality contain ingredients that are prohibited in organic crop production.

Do retail establishments, like nurseries, need to be certified in order to sell organic products and plants?

No. As long as they are only reselling products or plants they are bringing in for sale. However, they are responsible for making sure that any organic plants they sell are managed organically while under their care. If the nursery is growing its own organic plants, then it needs to be certified.

What are the basic requirements for producing organic bedding plants, vegetable starts, or other seedlings?

Organic seed must be used, or if organic seed is not commercially available, untreated seed.

Approved materials including potting soil, fertilizer, and pest and disease control substances must be used.

Plants must not be contaminated or commingled with non-organic plants.

What are the basic requirements for producing organic greenhouse crops?

Crops must be produced in soil that has not been treated with a prohibited substance for 3 years.

Organic seed must be used, or if organic seed is not commercially available, untreated seed.

Approved materials including potting soil, fertilizer, and pest and disease control substances must be used.

Crops must not be contaminated by prohibited substances.

Can landscapers and lawn care providers be certified organic?

No. The standards are meant to certify crops, not professional services. However, the Northeast Organic Farming Association does run an accreditation program for organic land and lawn care professionals.

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Fall Can be a Time for Profits, Planting

Tina Smith
Extension Floriculture Specialist
University of Massachusetts
Amherst

When people turn their calendars from August to September, they think **fall**. September marks the start of the school year, Labor Day weekend and the beginning of the fall gardening season. Growers and retailers want to sell more plant material. However, growers are a little nervous about being left with unsold plants. By working together, growers and retailers can benefit and make fall profitable.

Seasonal color palette

Color is an important factor when thinking about fall markets. Oranges, reds, golds, browns, blacks and dark greens are ingrained in consumer's minds for fall colors. Like it or not, people grow accustomed to certain colors for certain times of the year. Pink, lavender, white, pale blues, light yellows are the colors of spring and are a difficult sell in the fall.

Here in Massachusetts, selling plants other than chrysanthemums and asters in fall can be a challenge. First, our fall growing season is short, and price-conscious consumers perceive annuals to be short-lived. Secondly, the naturally intense vibrant autumn colors of trees and shrubs can over-shadow smaller herbaceous plants.

Fall plant selections

Since so many new plants are introduced each year, it is important for growers to inform retail customers about them and how they can be marketed. Are the plants for late summer color?

Will the plants tolerate frost? Are they annuals that are frost-tolerant lasting throughout the autumn season or are they perennials that will come back next spring?

Annuals. Phlox, nemesia, diascia, calibrachoa, osteospermum, snapdragons, verbena and pansies are cold tolerant annuals that will withstand frost. They are great in combinations with perennial heuchera and grasses or sedges.

Chrysanthemums. Garden mums continue to be our number one fall crop. They are offered at every chain store, garden center and roadside stand. Mums are popular because they can hold their own when surrounded by color and actually compliment nature's pallet. On the down side, mums have saturated the market driving down the price.

During the 2006 New England Greenhouse Conference, Kristin Graham from D.S. Cole Growers in Loudon, N.H. provided some great suggestions on fall profitability that included colors, textures and combinations. Kristin suggested increasing mum sales by offering different sizes and combining them with other fall material. Using 4" mums for window boxes and using half bushel mums for interiorscapes, weddings and other events and using mums and asters in combinations will help sell mums and other plants for fall and make patio pots stand out among the natural fall colors.

Asters. While mums are available in every color except blue, asters are available in white, red, pink, lavender, and blue. Blue and purple colored asters are the most popular. Two well-known series are 'Viking' and 'Victoria'. 'Viking' has set the standard for a number of

years with single flowers and yellow centers. It flowers early to mid season. 'Victoria' is a new hardy series that has beautiful double flowers. It flowers 10-14 days after 'Viking' and lasts longer, so it is a great variety to extend sales.

Hibiscus. *Hibiscus moscheutos* 'Luna' series from PanAmerican Seed is another late season sales extender. Plants have large flowers in red, deep burgundy red or blush, white with light pink rim and dark red eye. They are hardy to USDA Hardiness Zone 5. They stay compact, growing 24- 36" tall with nice branching. Plants flower through the heat of August and into cool September.

Sedum. In addition to *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy', growers might consider adding a few new varieties. *Sedum spectabile* 'Stardust' has silvery pink flowers over light green leaves and retailers can market this variety for white gardens. 'Frosty Morn' is a variegated upright sedum that has white to pink flowers and variegated gray-green leaves edged in ivory.



Sedum 'Stardust' (Bluestone Perennials)

Boltonia. This perennial from the Aster family is known by gardeners for its easy culture. They grow 4-5 feet tall, which makes them unmanageable for container production. 'Jim Crockett', a new compact variety from Ball

FloraPlant, was named in honor of Jim Crockett, former host of "The Victory Garden" and was developed by our friend, the late Dr. Thomas Boyle at the University of Massachusetts. It is only 20 inches tall and has 2- inch mauve-violet daisies from July until late September. It is suited for full sun or light shade and is not susceptible to powdery mildew as many of its aster cousins.



Boltonia 'Jim Crockett' (Ball Seed)

Pansies. If you have stopped growing fall pansies, because they were not profitable, it may be time to try again. The creative marketing efforts of 'Icicle®' Pansies from Fernlea as "hardy" pansies have paved the way for 'Snow Angels™' from Ball and the 'Snowman Pansies™' from Pleasant View Gardens. The most requested colors are yellow, orange and blue.

Groundcovers. Fall is a good time to plant groundcovers. Kristin suggested STEPABLE® groundcovers which have been a huge marketing success with retailers and consumers. Kristin's two top sellers are moss and thyme.

Grasses. Kristen suggested these grasses and sedges for fall. For annual grasses try *Pennisetum* 'Rubrum', *Pennisetum glaucum* or purple millet. Annual sedges include *Carex*



Pennisetum 'Rubrum'

'Bronzita', C. 'Red Rooster' and C. 'Amazon Mist' which hold up well in drought and frost.

The perennial grass, *Panicum virgatum* 'Shenandoah' turns from true blue green to red tones in late summer, eventually turning burgundy with rosy, airy panicles. It is a fast grower to 4' tall.

Vegetables. Ornamental cabbage and kale are two underused plants that provide color that increases with cold weather and lasts well after fall foliage has dropped from trees.

Try some novelty varieties with more upright form, serrated leaf texture and earlier color. 'Peacock' kale is available in white and red and has deeply serrated and feathery leaves. 'Red Bor' kale has extremely curled leaf margins and colors up early for better sales. Try selling plants grouped 3 in a large tub or basket. Retailers might price plants to offer a discount for multiple plants. This way the consumer will get a good value while the grower obtains a reasonable profit.

Swiss chard. 'Bright Lights', an All-America Selections winner, produces colored stems in reds, pink, yellow and orange. Easily grown, cool-tolerant and edible, try using them in mixed containers with ornamentals or with herbs for a unique product.

Show customers that the end of summer is not the end of the gardening season, but the beginning of a new season for fresh, colorful and frost-tolerant plants. The fall gardening season is a beautiful time of year and is the fastest growing revenue season for our industry in the U.S.



Swiss Chard 'Bright Lights' (AAS)

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