



Coral is the Cool Color for 2019

By Dawn Pettinelli, UConn Home & Garden Education Center

According to the Pantone Color Institute, which specializes in color trend forecasting, the in-vogue and in-demand color for 2019 is 'living coral'. Never did I realize the wonderful vibrancy and warmth of undersea coral until I visited Greece and viewed the locally sourced coral jewelry and associated items. The folks at Pantone claim, "Living Coral emits the desired, familiar, and energizing aspects of color found in nature. In its glorious, yet unfortunately more elusive, display beneath the sea, this vivifying and effervescent color mesmerizes the eye and mind."

This is all fine but for us gardeners the bottom line is that coral colors have always been a welcome addition to many gardens and landscapes. Over the past few years the most notable coral colored garden additions have been a perennial species commonly called, coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.). Their common name obviously was derived from the colors of their tiny, bell-shaped, hummingbird-attracting flowers that were produced in profusion but in a pinkish coral color.

Since their introduction into American gardens, vast changes in their physical appearance have taken place. Foliage is forefront, not flowers. New cultivars with distinctive and downright gorgeous leaves now dominate the market place. My favorite is still 'Crème Dolce' but 'Southern Comfort' takes a close second and more cultivars are to be found with creamy peach to coral foliage.

Heuchera 'Crème Dulce' image by D. Pettinelli



Living coral and associated color variants are so pronounced in roses. Top choice is 'Tropicana', a rose that won twelve international awards and is sure to be a hit in your garden. Not only does this rose have enormous 5-inch blooms but it sports a luscious sweet fruity fragrance and flowers from early summer until hit by frost.

For a tough coral colored landscape rose, check out Coral Knock-Out rose. The Knock Out series of roses produce copious, continuous blooms, glossy green foliage on bushy, upright 4 ½-foot plants. The coral color of the blossoms is retained in hot, humid weather.

Those looking for a coral colored rose that can serve as a ground cover, might check out ‘Coral Drift’. This introduction from the renowned House of Meilland in France is a cross between full size roses and miniatures. Own root plants reach about a foot and a half high and two and a half feet wide. Three waves of blooms produce hundreds of 1 to 2 inch blossoms.

Coneflowers (*Echinacea*) are tough, rugged garden plants and as with coral bells, breeders have recently been introducing new and varied selections many of them in gorgeous coral hues. ‘Sombrero Hot Coral’ sports warm orange pink flowers with generous seed heads serving as quite the attraction to birds after the seeds have ripened. Compact plants reach about 2 feet in height and width and are hardy to zone 4.

‘Coral Reef’ is a spectacular double flowered coneflower. Orange to coral petals surround a large, central, rusty coral-red cone. Bushy, well-branched plants bloom from midsummer through fall and are deer resistant and attractive to pollinators.

Another compact coral colored coneflower is ‘Mama Mia’. The large blossoms are perfect for cutting. Petals change from red to orange to coral to pink. All coneflowers are fairly drought resistant, once established and bloom most profusely in full sun.



Numerous species of annuals can also be had to fill your containers and gardens with colorful coral hues. Look for one of the Wave™ varieties of petunias like ‘Shock Wave Coral Crush’ or ‘Easy Wave Coral Reef’. These floriferous plants produce multitudes of blossoms from late spring through fall frosts. These petunias may reach 6 to 12 inches high but are noted for their spread – often growing to 3 feet in diameter. Self-cleaning flowers are a plus as deadheading petunias is sticky business.

Petunia image by D. Pettinelli

Among the least demanding, easiest and most rewarding annuals to grow are zinnias. They come in just about all colors with some nice picks in coral. For bedding or containers, look to ‘Profusion Coral’ with 2-inch flowers on mounded plants approximately a foot tall and wide. If cut flowers are desired, choose ‘Benary’s Giant Coral’ with huge 4 to 6-inch blossoms on 4-foot plants. This variety has a low susceptibility to powdery mildew. ‘Dreamland Coral’ with 4-inch blooms on foot high plants makes quite the statement massed in beds or borders.

Plenty of other annuals boast coral colored selections including verbenas, impatiens, salvia, begonias, dahlias, coleus and calibrachoa. Look for them in seed and plant catalogs now or in local garden centers once spring weather commences. Coral combines especially nicely with white, pale yellow, blue and purple. It may not blend well with certain shades of orange, red or pink but as color is more a matter of personal preferences, use your judgement when combining plants in containers or garden beds.

For horticultural information or answers to your gardening questions, feel free to contact us at (877) 486-6271 or www.ladybug.uconn.edu or call your local Cooperative Extension Center.