All America Selection Winners for 2020
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Looking for the best and brightest flowers and vegetables to add to your garden this season? Be sure to start with All America Selection Winners. These plants have been grown in gardens throughout the United States and parts of Canada and received top ratings. Give them a chance to shine for you.

This year’s AAS winners feature 6 vegetables, 2 herbaceous perennials and one annual. While coleus ‘Main Street Beale Street’ is far from the flowering annual that typically captures winner status, its beautiful deep red foliage remains crisp and colorful throughout the growing seasons. These bushy plants grow 2 to 3 feet tall and promise tolerance to wind, rain and heat. Coleus do well in sun or shade in garden beds or containers. Fertilize monthly for best performance.

Coleus ‘Main Street Beale Street’ image by AAS.

‘Sombrero Baja Burgundy’ echinacea is noted for its vibrant, deep violet-red blooms, a standout in the garden and also, great for cutting. The well-branched plants reach about 20 inches in height and produce 3-inch blossoms from mid-summer until frost. ‘Sombrero Baja Burgundy’ is a hardy, deer resistant selection attractive to bees and butterflies. Plant in full sun and enjoy the uniquely colored blossoms.

A second lively herbaceous perennial winner is ‘American Gold Rush’ rudbeckia. Golden yellow 2-inch flowers feature a black eye. Two-foot, stocky plants are tolerant to drought and resistant to Septoria leaf spot. Like all rudbeckias, this selection thrives in full sun and well drained soils. Blooms attract pollinators and can be used fresh or dried.
For those thinking about growing watermelons, ‘Mambo’ may be the perfect choice to start with. Each vine will produce 3 to 4, nine-inch diameter watermelons weighing in at about 11 pounds. The rounded fruit boasts of tasty, crisp, deep red flesh. Give this plant some space as vines can reach 12 feet in length. Fruits mature about 75 days from transplant.

Cucumber ‘Green Light’ is an early-maturing, mini cucumber that is perfect for trellising or staking. The 3 to 4-inch fruits are ready just 37 to 42 days after seeds germinate. Each plant produces up to 40 spineless, cucumbers. They are a beautiful light green color, sweet and crisp, and of superior eating quality. Succession plantings are recommended to extend the harvest period.

An unusual new pumpkin variety that excels in both its decorative appeal and taste is ‘Blue Prince’. As its name suggests, the flattened pumpkins are a beautiful blue color. The delectable flesh is dark orange, non-stringy, sweet and savory. Five foot-long vines do need some room to roam. Seeds can be planted as soon as soil temperatures reach 65°F as a long growing season is needed for these 110-day plants. The pumpkins reach about 12 inches in diameter and weigh between 7 and 10 pounds.

Pumpkin ‘Blue Prince’ image by AAS.

Three tomatoes were 2020 AAS winners. ‘Apple Yellow’ is an indeterminate variety with yellow fruit shaped like an apple. Plants need to be staked at they climb to about 6 feet in height. Fruits have a sweet, citrusy taste and are a little over an inch in size. While small in stature, they are abundant in numbers with each plant producing up to 1000 tomatoes. Start the seeds of this disease resistant tomato extra early or purchase transplants as plants mature in 110 days from transplanting.

‘Celano’ is a patio type grape tomato that only grows to about 40 inches. It will grow well in a large container but the stocky, semi-determinate plants need a tomato cage or other form of support. Plants have excellent late blight tolerance. The sweet, oblong fruits are deep red and continue to be produced until stopped by fall frosts.

Those interested in canning may want to give ‘Early Resistance’, a rounded Roma tomato a try. The determinate, stocky plants do not need staking and are not prone to blossom end rot. The disease resistance of this variety is impressive. Fruits are small but plentiful and one judge noted ripe tomatoes by mid-July. The flavor was rated excellent with just the right blend of sugar to acid.

One more tomato that Northeast growers might want to consider is ‘Buffalosun’, a regional winner. Fruits of this indeterminate variety have the look of an heirloom with red/orange flame coloration. Plants, however, exhibit greater disease resistance, especially to late blight, higher yields, and less cracking. Tomatoes are flattened beefsteak types about 4 inches in diameter and 2 inches in height. Taste is reputedly exceptional and the attractive, marbled slices are perfect for those BLTs.

AAS winners are rigorously judged so you can be sure they are the cream of the crop. Do give them a try as they will surely be winners in your garden too. Visit AAS for previous years’ winners.

For other horticultural questions, feel free to contact us, toll-free, at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center at (877) 486-6271, visit our website or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.