

Features

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Stuff We Love

Staff Editors



Putting the “Pazzaz” in the Garden

I had about the same kind of gardening year that Ellen did, which is to say it pretty much stunk. There were a few standouts this year, though, and Mega Pazzaz Pink Twist Portulaca from Danziger was definitely the big one. This pink-and-yellow striped beauty was the jazz hands my garden needed to give it some fun and vivaciousness (especially when everything else was struggling in the heat of summer). It withstood all the crazy ups and downs our Northeast Ohio summer threw at it, from a cooler start and downpours to seemingly weeks without rain and with high heat. It played

nicely with the other components of my mixed container and continues to bloom as I write this on the last day of August. I haven't really planted much portulaca, but you can bet I'll be looking for it again next spring.

—Green Profit *Managing Editor Jennifer Polanz*

Sally is Super Fun

I fell in love with this plant when I first saw it at CAST in March, so I was very glad when it was included with the plant samples the folks at Danziger were kind enough to send me. Blue Lagoon is part of the Sallyfun series of *Salvia farinacea*, and besides the beautiful color and all of the busy bumbles who come to visit it, I like that it's bloomed all summer. And like other *S. farinacea* types, it should bloom all the way until the first frost. The fact that you don't have to deadhead it and that it's drought tolerant is also a big plus—especially when my 13-year-old is in charge of “watering” my plants when I'm traveling.

—GrowerTalks Managing Editor Jen Zurko



Tuff Stuff

I'm sure I'm not alone in my thumbs-down assessment of the summer of 2022. The drought in the Northeast has been relentless. Municipal water bans are everywhere, which is usual for us. And if you're on your own well as I am, you weigh the importance of using what water you have for household needs (how badly does everyone have to shower?) versus how badly the garden needs watering (I'm getting no sympathy from Californians). I've officially thrown up my hands and am letting the professional farmers surrounding me supply my zucchini and tomato needs. What do I love this summer? Not much.

But I do love one thing: the Mojave Yellow Improved Purslane from Proven Winners. Yes, it's an improvement over an existing variety, but I never experienced the previous version, so it's new to me! And, gosh, did it delight. Sunny yellow flowers greeted me midday, every day, once the sun peeked around a nearby maple. Large blooms, too! I paired it with Superbells Double Yellow Calibrachoa, Bright Lights Horizon Sunset Osteospermum, Truffula Pink Gomphrena and Superbells Yellow Calibrachoa.

What's the improvement? I was told by John Gaydos at the Pleasant View Gardens Open House that its flowers, which are slightly larger, endure a dramatically hot sun at least an hour or more than the original variety before having to close up for the day. They had an old-versus-new display to illustrate just that. I'm supremely happy with this improvement. Now if they could only improve my chances of rain ...

—Green Profit Senior Editor At-Large Ellen C. Wells



A Sandwich Super “Star”

I love a BLT sandwich. But you can't make a good BLT without good tomatoes. Now, normally, I make my BLTs with Early Girls, the most dependable variety in my home garden. But Early Girl's fruits are small and it takes four slices, slightly overlapping, to fill one BLT sandwich. And you know what happens when you overlap tomatoes that have been lubricated with mayonnaise. Yup! Tomato slippage!

Enter Tomato BlushingStar F1, the first large beefsteak tomato I've been able to grow consistently in my garden. An indeterminant variety bred by PanAmerican Seed, BlushingStar has the look of an heirloom tomato, but with all the disease-resistance of an F1 hybrid, so you get loads of blemish-free fruit

all season long. The 12- to 16-oz. fruits have attractive heirloom-like ribbed shoulders and pinkish flesh that has a good balance of sugar and acid. One slice fills a BLT with no danger of it escaping the bonds of the lightly toasted white bread. I'll be growing this one again!

—Editor Chris “Bossman” Beytes