

Features

10/31/2025

Stuff We Love ('25 Edition)

Compiled by Jennifer Polanz



**Pearls & Jade (left) and
Global Green (right) pothos.**

Chris Beytes, Editor-in-Chief

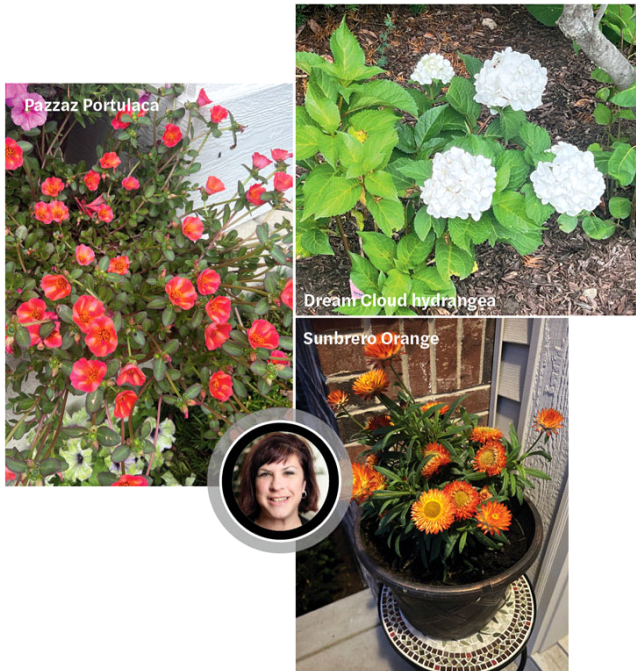
With our move to Florida in late 2023, we haven't yet had the chance to garden with traditional annuals—we're too busy putting in the bones of our gardens. As for perennials? Well, this is Zone 9b, so the list is short. I do have one favorite hosta (Island Breeze) I nursed through the summer in some deep shade and a new Proven Winners hydrangea (Incrediball Stormproof) in a container that we're testing ... but will it get enough winter chilling to bloom next year?

But foliage! Laurie (the real horticulturist in the family) has been going extra crazy with foliage. Her two most recent purchases are both cultivars of pothos: Global Green and Pearls & Jade. Global Green has green-on-green variegation, medium green in the center and

darker green at the margins. Pearls & Jade (which is not new, having been introduced to the industry in 2009, but is new to us) has white and silvery gray variegation that appears on the outer edges of the leaves, with some flecks of green within the variegation. Leaves are a bit smaller than regular pothos ... we both wonder what it would do if we planted it outside and let it climb up a tree—would the leaves grow to 18 in. or more like a golden pothos, from which it is a mutation?

Global Green was bred in Japan and Costa Farms has the rights to produce it here. Pearls & Jade is a product of the University of Florida—our alma mater!

Why pothos, such a simple houseplant? Because they thrive in the low light of our home's interior. "They're pretty indestructible," said Laurie.



Jennifer Zurko, Editor

I don't usually have much luck with hydrangeas. I don't know why (maybe it's because they've heard me say my favorite plants are dahlias). So when Bailey kindly sent me a sample of their new *H. macrophylla* DreamCloud, I planted it with a wish and a prayer. And you know what? It's been a pleasant surprise! It started blooming shortly after I put it in the ground with the most pure white blooms I've seen on a hydrangea.

Now, the weather in Chicago has been wacky—as I type this, it's in the mid to high 80s in early October. We've had days and days of high temperatures and humidity, then rain, so poor little DreamCloud is suffering the consequences. Pair that with the surrounding established hydrangeas the landscapers have planted around my townhome with a horrible case of Cercospora, DreamCloud has had a lot of challenges

during its first year. But it's hanging in there and there's nary a spot of Cercospora on its leaves. Fingers crossed it'll want to come back next year!

The one plant that absolutely LOVED the hot Chicago summer was Mega Pazzaz Tropical Twist Portulaca from Danziger. I put it in a shallow bowl on my front step and it's been thriving ever since. The front of my house faces south, so everything just cooks in the sun. So while the petunias and calibrachoas were struggling, Tropical Twist was doing its thing: the blooms opening and closing with the sun and just growing and growing. And, again, because it's still hot here, I still have it out there. The mums may have heat delay because of the warm temperatures, but this portulaca is doing just fine.

Another plant that's enjoying the prolonged summer weather is Sunbrero Orange Bracteantha from Kientzler. Strawflowers are in my Top 5, so the fact that it's stuck around for this long, going from summer staple to fall decoration seamlessly, is a bonus. Whether it'll still be here on Halloween is another story, but the crazy weather has made it a strong possibility.

Bill Calkins, Senior Editor/Digital Editor

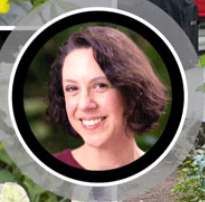


In our California Spring Trials recap podcast, one of my picks of the trials was Benary's new Whopper Bronze Leaf Salmon and I casually mentioned it would be cool to get samples to test out at my house. A couple weeks later, a big box showed up on my porch and inside were three 6-in. pots with the new begonia! I was thrilled (shout out to Dwight Deppen at Benary for hooking me up) and immediately planted them into 16-in. patio pots—one by our front door on an antique grain scale I scavenged up somewhere and the others on my back patio shaded by huge arborvitae. With barely any effort (watered when I felt like it, but mostly relied on Mother Nature), they did their thing all summer long, growing big, but staying under control and blooming continuously. The foliage color stayed dark, and even

though drought and insect pests were relentless, nothing really impacted the Whoppers. In fact, as I write this on September 30, they still look awesome. I'm a huge fan.

Another sample box I received this spring included a bunch of Sol Luna Prime hybrid impatiens from Danziger. I was psyched to get so many because I figured they'd get big and fill space in my mixed containers and provide plenty of color in a front bed out by the sidewalk that people walk past all the time, but one that I don't water often because I'm usually too lazy to drag the hose that far. I was NOT disappointed. The Sol Luna Primes I planted in our three big patio pots did great all summer long, even when some of the smaller plants burned up. And the three I planted in our front bed got big (not too big, but added plenty of color before the hibiscus bloomed) and handled the summer heat and my neglect just fine. I can't say if they're better than other hybrid New Guineas on the market, but I'll vouch for their performance in a range of conditions. I'd for sure buy them in the future for the same uses.

Jennifer Polanz, Managing Editor



We see lots of new petunias every year, but every once in a while one really stands out, whether it's for color or performance (or both). This year I was smitten with Amazonas Plum Cockatoo Petunia from Danziger. It's a beautiful watercolor mix of greens, purples and whites that's reminiscent of a Monet painting. I paired it up with Danziger's Vanessa Bicolor Indigo Verbena and Dümmer Orange's Scala Cappello White Scaevola for a mixed hanging basket that lasted past spring and well into the summer months.

I'm always looking for something visually interesting, and my favorite color is yellow, so of course I gravitate toward plants that give me that happy pop of sunshine. This year, Proven Winners provided that pop with the difficult-to-pronounce, but lovely Oenothera Superlophus Sunglow (common name Texas primrose). It simultaneously provided great color with interesting texture from its slight and almost grassy foliage. What's even better is this is one tough cookie, taking heat and drought like a champ.

My last item is not a plant, but a product I tested out and am now a believer in. At Cultivate I met Colleen Schoch,

where she was promoting the Twisters and Spirals products through Gourmet Gardeners. I thought it was an interesting concept, particularly the Twisters. Typical tomato cages can take up a fair amount of room to store and get tangled up with other supplies. She gave me a sample that comes with the support and a stake (you supply the pole) and I tested it. It took a little finagling to get the support stake at the bottom to hold properly, but once I did it lasted the rest of the summer into fall, and when I took it down it snapped right back to its original flat shape, making it super easy to store over the winter. These come three to a box, expand up to 7 ft. and can be used for tomatoes, training topiaries, climbing plants or anything else that needs some tall support. **GP**