

7/15/2008

## Container Must-Haves

*Ellen C. Wells*

### Hot Topic: Networking for Must-Haves

If you're like me, you look for creative inspiration and ideas wherever you can find them. In my search for the plants that are must-haves for industry folks, I asked colleagues in my LinkedIn online professional network for some of their favorite plants to use in containers. If you've never been on the site ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)), it's one of several professional versions of online social networking. And it's a wonderful opportunity to gain feedback from the four corners of the globe.

**Q. Which plants do you feel have outstanding performance and beauty in a container? I'm looking for any plant you can't imagine not including in your container planting this coming season.**

Black Pearl Ornamental Peppers! They go well with Carex 'Bronco' and a slew of other things. Beautiful foliage and pretty fruit. They have the added benefit of attracting beneficial insects to the garden. The only problem with those peppers was that we couldn't keep them in stock!

—Christine Fuller Lucas, Hester and Zipperer Home & Garden Showplace, Georgia

---

For the southern regions I am a big promoter of citrus in containers. With adequate feeding the foliage remains a rich green. The plants are easy to keep to the proper size. The foliage comes back from wilting if a watering is missed on a hot day. I prefer the semi-dwarf mandarins. The fruit is plentiful and smaller-sized fruit stays in scale to the tree. Lemons are popular, but the trees themselves are not as attractive as mandarins, oranges or grapefruit.

—Frank Tremmel, The Rainbow Gardens, California

Here are my top picks for cold climate tropical containers: agapanthus, agave, asparagus Meyer, bougainvillea, canna Tropicanna, citrus, Cestrum newellii, colocasia, cordyline, ensete, Eucalyptus cinerea, jatropa, lantana, mandevilla, palms, philodendron, phormium and plumbago.

The key is low maintenance and plants that will perform every day. Most of these blow annuals

away as far as adding excitement and Wow! factor to your pots. Not all of these have flowers; some of the best are non-blooming.

—Tim Barthel, *MT Garden Sales, Connecticut*

---

Euphorbia Diamond Frost! It's like Baby's Breath for living bouquets. And it lives everywhere!

—Jimmy Turner, *Dallas Arboretum, Texas*

---

Succulents seem to be gaining in popularity. Super easy and cool looking! We're planning to do a succulent container garden workshop this spring. We're bringing in a nice assortment of succulents, plus several of the new variegated agaves. I think it will go over well.

—Joshua Spece, *In The Country Garden & Gifts, Iowa*

---

Jimmy's right about Diamond Frost; it's the best in sun or shade. Here in Des Moines I like lantana for hot non-stop color. With our cooler, shorter summers, it doesn't get out of hand like it does in the South. Proven Winners has some new lantanas, which I tried last summer—Luscious Citrus Blend. Even more compact and fabulous color!

—Marilyn Rogers, *freelance writer, Iowa*

---

Definitely Diamond Frost, then Golden Creeping Jenny. It goes everywhere except full, hot sun. Looks great with dark green foliage and Laguna lobelias... so beautiful.

—Jodie Bross, *Glenwild Garden Center, New Jersey*

---

We saw a beautiful urn with a blue agave with Diamond Frost dripping off the edges—very, very beautiful and impactful. We use perennials and woody ornamentals and interchange the annuals as accents. I like using heuchera and boxwoods as the anchor in most containers and change out the annuals as the season progresses.

—Lynne Phillips, *Natural Art Garden Center, Virginia*

---

I have really been stuck on the hardy fuchsia 'Aurea' the last few years. It's so easy and adds drama to anything it's near.

—Christina Salwitz, *The Personal Garden Couch, Washington*

---

I've got to agree with Jimmy and the others about Diamond Frost. It goes with ANYTHING. Last year I paired it with Eragrostis elliottii 'Wind Dancer' ... loved the texture contrast. I also buy the

Intensia phlox series... it sometimes poops out toward the end of the season but until then, it's great! In the shade, large, graceful hostas such as 'Regal Splendor' are swell in containers.

—*Deb Wiley, freelance writer and editor, Iowa*

---

John Gaydos of Proven Winners once said, "Without your heuchera, Dan, our Fall Magic Program (for containers) could not have been launched." With the slightest bit of bias, we offer plants that are colorful, drought-tolerant (unlike a fuchsia), flower over a long period and, very importantly, "play well with others." I feel they are the perfect container plant. They endure frost and winter temperatures to -20F, offering color 24/7. The "dead" sedges make a nice accent to the bronze/purple heucheras or contrasting with the gold/orange forms. That whole group that includes *Carex comans*, *C. buechananii*, and *C. testacea* in browns and silver-browns.

—*Dan Heims, Terra Nova Nurseries, Oregon*

---

I have fallen in love with Baby Wing begonias. They don't get quite as big as Dragon Wings, which sometimes can get to big for a small container, but they still provide a non-stop show all summer long.

—*Brian Bauman, Bauman's Farm and Garden, Oregon*

---

I like easy-care, fragrant, disease-resistant roses grown in pots. Try Marie Daly, Little White Pet, The Fairy and Iceberg. A wide variety of miniature roses grow well in pots, too.

—*Barbara Scheer, New Biology, California*