TEXAS SUPERSTAR™ PLANT TRIAL DEMONSTRATION

Victoria County Master Gardeners, Cooperator, 2008
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Victoria County

SUMMARY: Ten of sixteen plants grown for nearly one year and evaluated by Master Gardeners performed adequately to be recommended to be named a new Texas Superstar™. These include: New 'Peppermint Flare' perennial hibiscus; 'Flare' Hibiscus Texas SuperStar™ in 2000; Thryallis, Galphimia glauca; 'Cora' Periwinkle; Dwarf Bush Morning Glory named 'Daily BM'; Sky Vine (Thunbergia grandiflora); 'Dwarf Cherry Surprise' Tomato; TAMU Mild Jalapeno; Salvia - 'Mystic Spires'; and 'Blue Princess' Verbena.

OBJECTIVE:

To evaluate the characteristics and adaptability of new trial plants to earn the Texas SuperStar™ distinction for home and commercial landscapes. To identify commonly used plants that can be grown with minimal inputs yet possess a high level of landscape performance and outstanding disease and insect tolerance/resistance. For further information, see the following website: http://www.texassuperstar.com/.

MATERIALS and METHODS:

One to several plants of numerous plant species were received from Dr. Jerry Parsons and planted in the Victoria Educational Gardens (VEG) or at homes of Victoria Master Gardeners to evaluate for potential SuperStar™ designation.

Varieties are monitored and evaluated by Victoria County Master Gardener volunteers. Varieties were evaluated on foliage health - quantity and quality, flower or fruit - quantity and quality, growth habit – form and shape and general acceptance as a recommended species.

Test plants distributed in 2008 for the Texas Superstar™ consideration and their evaluation are listed in the RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS section of this report.

RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS:

2008 was a dry year with only 21 inches of rainfall compared to the normal 34 – 37 inches of rainfall, thus results may not be as ideal as possible for selected species of plants. These plants planted in VEG received minimal maintenance and watering throughout the growing period. Evaluations were made periodically and throughout the growing season until December, 2008.

TRIAL PLANTS INCLUDED:

1. New 'Peppermint Flare' perennial hibiscus — Scheduled for promotion in with 'Flare' and 'Pink Flare' in 2010 (June) if sufficient numbers are available. Available from ColorSpot and Mountain States Nursery wholesale nurseries.
http://www.plantanswers.com/hibiscus.htm

> **2008 Evaluation:** Gorgeous 5" – 6" blooms, plant size is 3' x 3', full sun,
> Recommendation - Yes

'Flare' Hibiscus Texas SuperStar™ in 2000.

> **2008 Evaluation:** Gorgeous 5" – 6" blooms, plant size is 3' x 3', full sun,
> Recommendation - Yes

2. Thryallis, Galphimia glauca — Deer resistant, scheduled for promotion' in 2009. Available from ColorSpot and Greenleaf wholesale nurseries.
http://www.plantanswers.com/thyrallis.htm

> **2008 Evaluation:** This plant is planted VEG for several years already and is a profuse bloomer with good fall color.
> Recommendation - Yes

3. 'Grandma's Yellow' Rose — An attractive and useful to the gardening masses rose that can be propagated easily, offers unique desirable and ornamental characteristics and is relatively pest resistant.
http://www.plantanswers.com/grandmas_yellow_rose07.htm

> **2008 Evaluation:** We had some problems with black spot but it is doing better now; slow growth, small blooms.
> Recommendation: Maybe

4. 'Cora' Periwinkle — Disease resistant annual Vinca (Periwinkle); Deer-resistant, Semi-Shade Tolerant, Drought-Tolerant Periwinkle (from seed) or 'Nirvana' (from cuttings) http://www.plantanswers.com/vinca_perriwinkle.htm

2008 Evaluation: The 12 Cora periwinkles were planted alongside 12 periwinkles bought locally and all bought locally died within 2 months from disease while most of the Cora lived through summer but died by fall except for one plant that lived until December freeze.
Recommendation - Yes

5. Dwarf Bush Morning Glory named 'Daily BM'.
http://www.plantanswers.com/bush_morning_glory.htm

2008 Evaluation: A spectacular heat tolerant bloomer that grows 5' tall and 5' wide. Would like it to be more dwarf. Has shown frost damage.
Recommendation - Yes, but would be great if it were more dwarf.

6. New Giant 'Samba' Portulaca —

2008 Evaluation: We did not receive this plant.

7. Sky Vine (Thunbergia grandiflora) — Also known as Blue Bengal Clock-Vine. An evergreen, tropical vine that produces medium sized, dark green, notched, ovate leaves and large, pale blue flowers in the fall. It is root-hardy in San Antonio and killed to the ground every winter.

2008 Evaluation: Sky Vine has quick growth for trellises but sparse blooms this year. Did have frost damage. (Home experience: It is a fantastic bloomer and comes back from roots)
Recommendation - Yes

8. Jerusalem Cherry — For ornamental use (although poisonous) and deer resistance
http://www.plantanswers.com/jerusalem_cherry07.htm

2008 Evaluation: This plant died, but unfortunately it was planted in full sun and planting in shade may have saved it.
Recommendation – No

9. Salvia greggii 'Big Pink' — Thought to be collected by Lynn Lowery in Mexico. Prolific bloomer. Common Name: Autumn Sage.
http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/apr02/art1apr.html

2008 Evaluation: Did not receive this plant.

10. 'Dwarf Cherry Surprise' – A great-tasting, true determinate, cherry tomato which is great for patio and/or container gardening.
http://www.plantanswers.com/onions_garlic_lettuce.htm

2008 Evaluation: These were planted from seed and had good germination. Plants only grew 18 – 24 inches tall and fruit was small (size of marbles). May be a good patio/container tomato but is too small for general production.
Recommendation – Yes, for a patio garden; No, for general tomato gardening.

11. 'Nethery LJOE Jalapeno' — "LJOE" stands for "Largest Jalapeno on Earth" and privately developed jalapeno pepper from the genetics of 'TAM Mild Jalapeno II.' It is an open-pollinated selection from TAM Mild Jalapeno II made by Betty Nethery of Junction, Texas, over a ten year period. It is normally much larger than TAM Mild Jalapeno II and has a Scoville unit rating of about 2500 or hotter.

2008 Evaluation: These were planted from seed and were planted late in June. They had only 50 % germination and most of the flowers dropped with only a few producing fruit which never matured. We would like to plant them again; getting the seed earlier.
Recommendation – Maybe, can't fault them totally due to late planting.

12. TAMU Mild Jalapeno – These were planted from plants.

2008 Evaluation: Very nice, medium size jalapenos that produced an abundance fruit that was not too hot and lasted in the garden until a late December freeze.
Recommendation – Yes

13. Pomegranate, Punica granatum — Ornamental pomegranates: (1) Ten Double Pink (2) Ten Big Red (3) Seven Sweet Peppermint (4) Four Unknown --- Some very large specimens in 10 gallon containers; most are gallons.
http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/sep02/art1sep.html

2008 Evaluation: It performed as an evergreen; bloomed twice with peachy pink striped blooms and was slow to grow.
Recommendation - Maybe

14. Salvia, 'Mystic Spires' — Dwarf selection of 'Indigo Spires' Salvia to be a Texas SuperStar in 2009.
http://www.hort.cornell.edu/department/faculty/wmiller/bglannuals/2007/SalviaMysticSpiresBlue.html
http://msucares.com/news/print/snews/sg06/sg060309.html

2008 Evaluation: This plant was a spectacular bloomer with 10" x 12" flower spikes. The plant is 3' x 3'.
Recommendation - Yes

15. ‘Blue Princess’ Verbena — Texas SuperStar™ in 1998.
http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/98promotions/march/march.html

2008 Evaluation: Spreading 1’ x 3’, this one is evergreen at present (past experience dictates frost damage but it comes back)
Recommendation - Yes

16. ‘Dr. Seus’ Angel Trumpet — http://plantanswers.com/angel_trumpet.htm

2008 Evaluation: This plant died early and we are not sure why or if it should be recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

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