

# Trial gardens

## RATING THE NEW PLANTS

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Plant breeders worked overtime to develop some new black-flowered petunias, but how did they hold up in the unpredictable weather in Southern Ontario? Here's a look at some of the best performers trialed at the University of Guelph, Landscape Ontario in Milton and the Vineland Centre for Research and Innovation.



'Picnic Light Pink' petunia



'Supertunia Sangria Charm' petunia

### Petunias and Calibrachoa

'Picnic Light Pink' is a small-flowered petunia that is more compact and upright than trailing petunias such as the 'Wave' series. It has excellent rain tolerance and a prolific all-season long bloom habit. It is suitable for both container and ground bed applications.

'Supertunia Sangria Charm' and 'S. Indigo Charm' are the two colours in this new series of small flowered petunias. Of the two, Sangria Charm blooms more freely. This series is unique because of its exceptionally small flower size – a size approaching that of calibrachoa. Suitable for both ground bed and container applications; it has a moderately vigorous trailing growth habit and good rain tolerance.

The newly released 'black flowered' family of petunia includes 'Black Velvet', 'Pinstripe' and 'Phantom' and has received a lot of attention from visitors to the 2010 trials. 'Black Velvet' is the first all-black (very dark purple) petunia flower to reach the market although under very warm growing conditions the 'Black Velvet' flower may partially revert to the black and pale yellow star pattern of 'Phantom'. 'Pinstripe' has a fine white strip running the length of the petals. These plants will show best if protected from challenging weather conditions; all can be used in both ground beds and containers. Interplanting with contrasting colours (i.e. yellow, orange or white) may help bring out the uniqueness of this flower.

'Superbells Coralberry Punch and Blackberry Punch' are flowers with 'black eyes' and as such present a unique colour combination to the calibrachoa world; of the two, Coralberry Punch blooms the best.



Pelargoniums – annual geraniums

The 'Calliope' and 'Caliente' series are examples of interspecific crosses between zonal and ivy type geraniums. 'Calliope Dark Red' was one of the best performers this year with its large inflorescence, continuous blooming and healthy foliage. It did well in both ground beds and containers under both high and moderate nutritional levels. The 'Caliente' series has a smaller inflorescence size but it is equally prolific in bloom. 'Caliente Orange' was one of the series with exceptional bloom performance.

'Frenza Hot Coral', is the new name for 'Schone Von Rheinberg Coral'. It is another interspecific geranium hybrid. The coral-coloured blooms are prolific and consistent throughout the summer. There are three colours in the 'Schone Von Rheinberg' series, all bloom well but the coral colour stood out for me in 2010.

The 'Horizon' series of seed-propagated geraniums (Pelargonium) has three new colours: 'Deep Red', 'Neon Rose' and 'Tangerine'. Of the three, 'Deep Red' had the best summer-long bloom performance; the 'Tangerine' colour is quite unique for a seed-propagated geranium.

Something different

Mecardonia is a relatively new addition to the horticultural world. 'GoldDust' is the cultivar that was trialed in 2010. It is a mat-forming, ground-hugging plant with small dark green leaves that contrast nicely with its tiny golden yellow flowers. I grew this plant in both containers and ground beds with equal success. It is a relatively slow grower, so in mixed containers, it should have companions of equal vigour. In the ground this plant would look great trailing over rocks or along a gravel verge as long as the soil is moist.

'Spring Celebrities' is a series of hollyhock that blooms readily in the first year, producing multiple flower stalks throughout the growing season, never exceeding three feet in height. At this height it can be grown successfully in containers. Although susceptible to leaf rust, the quantity and quality of bloom remained the focus for the plant.

Come see for yourself how this year's crop of new plants fares. The Trial Garden Open House at Landscape Ontario (7856 Fifth Line South, Milton), takes place on Saturday, August 13, 2011. Updates and more information can be found at [www.plant.uoguelph.ca/trialgarden](http://www.plant.uoguelph.ca/trialgarden).



'Pinstripe' petunia



'Black Velvet' petunia



'Superbells Coralberry Punch' petunia



'Horizon Tangerine' geraniums



'GoldDust' mecardonia