

New Choices for FRONT-DOOR FLOWERBEDS

Story by Donna Roach

SPRING has truly arrived when the last frost of the season has passed. The soil is warm and the front garden lies dormant waiting only for your inspiration (and maybe a sequence of weekends) before it comes alive with color and texture.

For those of us who garden, the entrance way is always a work in progress, which often means modifying what we did the year before. It may be time to move a perennial to another location or to introduce a new variety of blooming shrub into the garden design. Whatever the project's focus, there are innovative solutions to try this year.

MORE PIZAZZ

This could be the year to try a new color scheme. Proven Winners® has added to its large selection of *Calibrachoa* with the introduction of Superbells® 'Coralberry Punch' and Superbells® 'Blackberry Punch' (see a description in our Hot Plants, p. 59). In both cases the name says it all.

These new plants still retain the characteristics that make Superbells® a popular annual choice in the Carolinas. The flowers do not require deadheading and they have the look of a small petunia. They may be planted directly in the soil or used in containers, where their trailing habit can be admired. Either way, Superbells® require good drainage in order to produce a full season of blooms.

Purple is the hot new color for 2011. In addition to the magenta edges of 'Blackberry Punch', Proven Winners is introducing its newest verbena hybrid Superbena® 'Royale Chambray'. It's





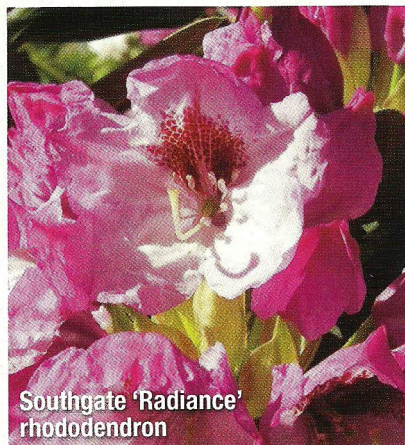
△ Create a cascade of continuous blooms with a container full of Superbells 'Coralberry Punch'.

Above: Full sun and good drainage will keep Superbells 'Blackberry Punch' blooming all season.



Southgate 'Brandi' rhododendron

Photo courtesy of the Southern Living Plant Collection.



Southgate 'Radiance' rhododendron

Photo courtesy of the Southern Living Plant Collection.

MORE SPACE

Are you expanding your front flowerbed? Maybe you will finally have space to add a shrub or a unique groundcover to a part of your plan. Southern Living Plants features the Southgate rhododendron series. This series of five heat-tolerant rhododendrons can add white, pink, lavender or magenta to your plan.

The 'Scintillation' x white form of *R. hyperythrum* (Southgate 'Brandi' rhododendron) is the smallest shrub in the series. Its height and width are a neat 3 to 4 feet. Its ruffled blooms start as a deep pink and lighten as they open.

The largest plant in the collection is 'Royal Purple' x *R. hyperythrum* (Southgate 'Radiance' rhododendron). The blooms progress from a deep lavender to purple. Just like the other plants in the Southgate rhododendron series, it grows well in Zones 6 to 9, particularly in the Deep South.

For some of us, a garden is incomplete without a rose. Fortunately, Tesselaar has been busy developing a new series – Next Generation Flower Carpet® Roses. Especially bred to tolerate heat and humidity, this groundcover rose may be planted in flower gardens, large containers or mass plantings.

With deep-green leaves as a background, Next Generation Flower Carpet roses bloom from mid to late spring, with some gardeners reporting longer bloom times. Flower Carpet 'Scarlet', one of the three selections in the series, spreads 40 inches across and reaches 24 to 32 inches high. For a groundcover, plant two to three rose bushes per square yard.

Flower Carpet 'Scarlet' roses prefer full sun, although they do fine in partial shade with four to five hours of sun.

more of a purple-blue, and the flowers are great for attracting butterflies. Growing 6 to 10 inches tall, 'Royale Chambray' may be pruned very slightly after branching in order to encourage additional blossoms and a "fuller look" throughout the season.

Even perennials are showing the purple trend. Tesselaar is releasing a new canna, 'Tropicanna Black', with purplish-black leaves that are enhanced by warmer temperatures. The leaves break through the ground when temperatures reach the 50s, but the magic begins as the season progresses.

When outdoor temperatures reach around 60 F consistently, the leaves darken to their unique color. Reaching heights of 4 to 6 feet tall, 'Tropicanna Black' adds vertical interest to the garden. The scarlet-orange flowers bloom between May and September.



**Next Generation Flower Carpet
'Amber' fills a front garden edged
with classic boxwood.**



Photo courtesy of www.tesselaar.com.

Exotic 'Festival Burgundy' cordyline suggests a tropical ambiance.



Mecardonia hybrid 'Golddust'

Photo courtesy of www.provenwinners.com.

EXCITING ANNUALS

Sometimes only annuals will do. If you have tired of petunias and marigolds, spice things up with some of the many new introductions. In addition to the *Calibrachoa* previously mentioned, there's a new *Mecardonia* hybrid (Gold Dust) from Proven Winners which will brighten any garden with its yellow blossoms.

A petite plant, Gold Dust grows 2 to 5 inches tall and has a trailing habit, which makes it perfect for landscapes or containers. It is a low-maintenance, heat-tolerant choice.

A taller selection is *Pentas lanceolata* 'Stars & Stripes' from Southern Living Plants. It grows between 1 and 2 feet tall with clumps 1 to 2 feet across. The variegated leaves and bright-red flowers provide interest in the garden.

Another annual for the Carolinas is an *Ageratum* hybrid ('Artist Blue' flossflower) from Proven Winners. 'Artist Blue' grows 8 to 12 inches, has a mounding habit and works well in both the landscape and in containers. They are native to the Americas, heat tolerant and low maintenance.

Finally, for the gardener who craves a tropical look, Tesselaar has *Cordyline* Festival Burgundy with a basal-branching structure that allows it to grow to a height of 3 feet. This unique feature creates the illusion of a flowing fountain as the leaves cascade from the center point. Festival Burgundy cordyline works well in containers or in the landscapes, especially in Zones 8 to 11. ☺

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