



Press Release from Proven Winners®

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Proven Winners® Welcomes 11<sup>th</sup> Signature Garden**

The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina is a destination for horticulturalists, gardeners and industry professionals.

[DeKalb, IL] – [June 21, 2024] – The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina in Willard, North Carolina, has earned the prestigious designation of Proven Winners® Signature Garden®, making it the 11<sup>th</sup> of these high-profile properties in the U.S.

Thanks to the trust and support in Proven Winners demonstrated by The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina leadership and staff, wholesale nursery and garden center Johnson Nursery and the gardens' development team, this new Signature Garden will leverage its conservation goals with its expansion plan to broaden awareness and attendance for those who will enjoy the nature trails, waterways and wooded areas in their future plans.

“The diverse balance of ornamental horticulture, engaging nature and a healthy calendar of agrotourism events promise to make The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina a showcase destination for Proven Winners products and gardening ideas,” says Josh Miller, Proven Winners landscape manager.

The Signature Garden certification is awarded to high-profile properties that demonstrate a strict set of criteria including high visibility, demographic synergies and a commitment to quality landscape presentation. Visitor traffic and revenues are enhanced by improved guest interest, garden tours, additional event opportunities and visitor appreciation.

“Signature Gardens serve many purposes for both their stewards and their visitors,” Miller says. “For the stewards, it is their proud expression of ornamental gardening excellence because they know and appreciate that Proven Winners is committed to introducing plants with the best garden performance. There are many positive takeaways for the visitors, whether they are local residents who visit often, industry professionals passing through to make decisions for the following season or garden tourists who are looking for their next destination.”

Johnson Nursery was founded in 1981 by David Johnson, who quickly realized that he needed a space to see the plants the nursery was growing at maturity. This desire for a display garden led him to establish The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina on an adjacent property. Now a nonprofit, the gardens'



mission is “to improve lives by cultivating inspiration,” and is open to visitors, garden clubs, families and professionals, inviting everyone to appreciate the beauty of nature. Encompassing acres of native hardwood forest, walking trails, creeks, agricultural fields and more, the expansive property is sure to attract visitors year-round with its engaging events and beautiful grounds.

“Being a Gold Key grower for Spring Meadow Nursery, we have all this diversity – more than we could have ever imagined,” Johnson says. “It really amplifies the need for a garden because we want to know what does well here. We want to be able to speak to our customers knowledgably and tell them why Proven Winners has a better hydrangea. It’s one thing to see a pretty picture and one thing to grow them in a 3-gallon container, but having them in the ground for us is really beneficial. So now we know, and our sales teams know, and our customers can see the end result.”

The new Signature Garden is now the fourth in North Carolina along with Creekside Gardens, Pinehurst Resort and Harrah’s Cherokee Resort. It’s a one-of-a-kind experience that showcases a wide spectrum of garden applications, allowing visitors to see a comprehensive display of Proven Winners genetics, including solutions to many common garden issues like dry shade and heavy root competition.

The new Signature Garden includes varieties like Supertunia® Royal Magenta® *Petunia*, Color Coded® ‘One in a Melon’ *Echinacea*, Pugster Blue® *Buddleia*, Pillow Talk® *Gardenia*, ColorBlaze® Wicked Hot® *Coleus*, Luscious® Berry Blend™ *Lantana*, Sprinter® *Buxus*, Superbena® Stormburst *Verbena*, Jazz Hands® Pink *Loropetalum*, Superbells® Doublette Love Swept™ *Calibrachoa*, Let’s Dance Can Do!® *Hydrangea macrophylla* and Puffer Fish® *Hydrangea paniculata*.

“This Proven Winners Signature Garden is important to the Southeast and features a full complement of Proven Winners plant varieties that thrive in the Southeast region,” says Tom Ewing, Proven Winners landscape program developer. “Unique to this garden is the fact that it is adjacent to Johnson Nursery’s retail location, providing visitors a local source for displayed plant materials within the garden.”

Learn more about this and other Proven Winners Signature Gardens at [bit.ly/signaturegarden](https://bit.ly/signaturegarden)

*Proven Winners is a global plant brand that introduces the industry's leading annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees, and houseplants to the market through a network of top propagators. It combines extensive experience, innovative thinking and world-class customer service to ensure professional growers and home gardeners have the most efficient tools and dynamic growing solutions for ongoing success. Look for Proven Winners products in garden centers throughout North America in their signature white branded container. More information about Proven Winners is available at [provenwinners.com](https://provenwinners.com).*

*The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina is a non-profit botanical garden committed to improving lives and nurturing creativity through the wonders of nature. Encompassing more than 300 acres in collaboration with Johnson Nursery, its goal is to become a top-tier destination and event venue for plant and nature enthusiasts, families and individuals of all ages. More information about The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina is available at [thegardensofsenc.com](https://thegardensofsenc.com).*