



# HighLights



Trial Gardens and HortResearch at the South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station

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Ornamental plants with black and burgundy foliage add a sharp color contrast to the landscape, attractive for their dark leaves alone or planted in combination with lighter foliage shades and bright flower colors. Several upcoming introductions and some old favorites are currently featured in the Trial Gardens.



*Hibiscus acetosella* 'Little Zin' (above), with its compact and well-branched habit, along with reddish and burgundy leaves, sets this 2016 introduction from Ball FloraPlant well apart from previous varieties of the cranberry hibiscus that tended to grow tall and fast, often requiring at least one pruning during the growing season. Based on our observations thus far, 'Little Zin' can be enjoyed for its foliage color in the front of the flower border, as a compact container specimen, or in mixed planters.



*Ipomoea batatas* 'SolarPower Black' (left), an ornamental sweet potato from Ball FloraPlant, will be new for 2016 gardens. Plants in our trial are showing a well-branched habit and consistently dark foliage in full sun, and they should be quite useful in containers and baskets, along with landscape beds. Two other foliage colors being trialed in this series are Red and Lime.



Dahlia 'Mystic Illusion' (above), sent to us by Proven Winners, has just recently started to bloom. The bright yellow flowers contrast well with the burgundy foliage of this new introduction.

Dahlia 'Dahlightful Georgia Peach' (right) is an upcoming introduction from Proven Winners. Visitors comment on the showy floral display of this variety, with flowers prominent atop the deep burgundy flower stems and burgundy tinted foliage.



Two tropical additions for the landscape that have done well in full sun in the Trial Gardens are *Colocasia* 'Black Coral' (above, left) and 'Diamond Head' (above, right). These elephant ears from the Royal Hawaiian series were sent to us by AgriStarts and were introduced through PlantHaven. Planted in spring of 2014, all plants survived the winter (dormant beneath their pine straw mulch) and have returned for visitors to enjoy in 2015.



Ornamental pepper 'Black Olive', an All-America Selections (AAS) Winner from 2012, is an annual favorite in the AAS Display Garden. The deep black peppers (left) will turn a contrasting red color as they ripen later in the season among the burgundy tinted foliage.



The 2015 Blueberry Jubilee ([www.blueberryjubilee.org](http://www.blueberryjubilee.org)) will be held in Poplarville on Saturday, June 13. The Trials Gardens at the South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station and tours of the USDA-ARS Southern Horticultural Laboratory will be included on wagon tours that will depart from behind the courthouse in downtown Poplarville approximately every 30 minutes between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM, weather permitting. The tour lasts about one hour. Visitors wishing to walk through the Trials Gardens at their leisure may drive to the station at 711 W. North Street and park in the gravel parking area.



The South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station is located at 711 W. North St., Poplarville, MS 39470 (across from Pearl River Community College). From the intersection of Highways 11 and 26, go ½ mile north on Hwy. 11 and one block west on W. North Street. The Trial Gardens are open daily during daylight hours. Removal of plant materials is prohibited. For questions about the gardens, call 601-795-4525.

