



HighLights



Trial Gardens and HortResearch at the South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station

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Published by Dr. Gene Blythe

With the arrival of hot weather, most spring crops have exited from the Trial Gardens, the exceptions being a select few that extended their display beyond the start of summer. Our thanks to the plant breeders who are working diligently to provide us with colorful annuals that perform in our warm, humid climate.



Dianthus 'Jolt Pink' (above), a new seed-grown variety from PanAmerican Seed and an All-America Selections (AAS) winner for 2015, has shown greater durability than annual *Dianthus* varieties of the past. The display of intense pink flowers above the dark green foliage on compact plants was a colorful sight in the early days of summer.



The Hot Pak series of compact French marigolds is being introduced by PanAmerican Seed for 2016 as better suited for areas with hot temperatures and high humidity. Plants in the Trial Gardens produced a display of flowers in mid-spring and, rather than heading downhill, flushed with a second display in late spring. Our favorite in the Trial Gardens was the variety 'Spry' (above) with its multi-colored flowers and sheer tenacity, extending its display well into the first weeks of summer.



Petunia 'Supertunia Vista Bubblegum' (above), a cutting-grown variety from Proven Winners, has been on the market for some time, and continues to rank as one of the most heat-tolerant (and colorful) petunias available. Long after most other petunias have given up, this variety has continued to produce new flowers on top of vigorous, mounding plants.



Calibrachoa (million bells) is typically a container-grown, spring-blooming annual in our area; however, 'Superbells Garden Rose' (above), new for 2016 gardens from Proven Winners, seems determined to break the rules. Plants in the Trial Gardens have covered the ground with a dense carpet of fresh, green foliage and are still flowering in mid-July!



What a pleasant surprise to find these golden-flowered California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) (left) still flowering in early summer in the Trial Gardens. These poppies must have enjoyed our spring rainfall, which has been in short supply in their native West Coast range.



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.

