



Bloom boom

Kalmia latifolia Firecracker, from Dick Jaynes and Briggs Nursery, explodes with red colored buds that open white, then to light pink. This easy-care, leaf spot-resistant mountain laurel is ideal for gardens up to Zone 5 — and, if protected, it works great in Zone 4. With a mature height of 3-x-2 ft. in 10 years, the Firecracker is a compact plant that is great for foundational plantings or to complement broadleaf evergreens. In addition, because mountain laurel are "off-limits" to deer, it's ideal for woodland settings. It blooms from late spring to early summer and is best in full sun in a cool, moist, well-drained, acidic soil. It also performs well in partial shade. For more information, visit www.briggsnursery.com.

2009 All-America Selections winner

As this year's recipient of the AAS Cool Season Bedding Plant award, the Viola F1 "Rain Blue and Purple" variety creates a spreading pool of cool blue colors. This cold- and heat-tolerant "Johnny Jump-Up" plant will bloom in the South during fall and winter, and in the North in the spring and summer. The 1.5-in. blooms change color from purple and white to purple and blue as they mature. The plants spread 10 to 14 in. in the landscape or container, and feature a trailing habit for hanging baskets or patio urns.

For more information, visit www.aaswinners.com.



Olympic gold

During the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, PanAmerican Seed's Taishan Marigold stood out among the more than 200 million plants that were used in landscape beds throughout the city, and continually thrived throughout the high humidity and extraordinary heat of the summer months. Available in 2010 to the trade, the African marigold variety is available in gold, yellow, orange and mixture. It offers strong branching and delivers high-impact color. For more information, visit panamseed.com.



Light breeze

As part of Novalis' Plants that Work by Color brand for 2009, Diascia Breezee is a softly hued twin spur ideal for mixed containers and window boxes. It can also serve as an excellent border plant in a sunny spot. It blooms best when night temperatures are cooler, and is at its peak in early spring to early summer and again in autumn. Colors in the series include Appleblossom and Apricot (pictured). For more information, visit www.novalis.com.

Ebony excellence

Wayside Gardens' new Aquilegia "Black Barlow" greets spring with violet-black, tiny dahlia-like blooms that continue to impress for three months or more in Zones 3 through 8. Bred specially for cutting, this shade perennial's long-stemmed flowers reseed generously to increase garden beauty every year. This vigorous plant reaches up to 3.5 ft. in bloom, and about 18 in. wide. For more information, visit www.waysidegardens.com.



SOARING EAGLE VARIETY FOCUS: COCONUT PALM *COCOS NUCIFERA*

Coconuts are the most universal and widely distributed palm tree in the world. Although used mainly for food, fiber, and construction in other countries, the coconut has become a symbol of the tropics for homeowners and developers everywhere. Although the tree is typically very cold-sensitive, surviving through the winter only in tropical or sub-tropical climates, it has been used seasonally in temperate climates for years. Planted for the summer, coconuts can add an instant tropical look to any home or business for very little cost.

