

HARVEY COTTEN, PAMELA CRAWFORD, & BARBARA PLEASANT



Simple



Colorful



Low Water

EASY GARDENS FOR THE SOUTH



FOR ZONES 6, 7, & 8 IN THE SOUTH. SEE MAP ON BACK COVER.



Simple

- ✿ Blue ribbon plants
- ✿ Only touch them once a year



**Back
Cover**

Low Water

- ✿ Plants that thrive with just rainwater
- ✿ The latest, water-saving techniques



Colorful

- ✿ Easy plants that offer months of color
- ✿ Colorful plants that require less than 5 minutes of care per year!

Southern Gardening Has Never Been So Easy!

The best annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees for the tough, southern climate.

Learn about plants that:

- ✿ Breeze through 100 degree plus temperatures
- ✿ Take both droughts and deluges
- ✿ Attract birds, butterflies, and hummingbirds
- ✿ Need no toxic chemicals
- ✿ Require minimal time from you!

Plus...

- ✿ 50 budget gardening tips
- ✿ Hundreds of easy color combinations!
- ✿ Lots of great southern natives

Geographic Areas Covered in Book



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Blue Ribbon Means Easy!

The easiest, blue ribbon plants require no more than one chore from you per year, in addition to proper planting, watering, and fertilization. Although we discuss many other plants in this book, we recommend that beginners or serial plant killers stick to the blue ribbon plants until they have some successful growing experiences.

Characteristics of the Blue Ribbon Perennials, Shrubs, Vines, & Trees

- ✿ Require touching (trimming, deadheading, etc) no more than once a year
- ✿ Are very well adjusted to the southern climate (drought years as well as years with normal or above normal rainfall).
- ✿ Fare well with little susceptibility to pests
- ✿ Have an established record (they've been around for enough years to fully understand it's requirements).
- ✿ Need water (at the most) once or twice a week after the establishment period (see pages 34 to 35). Many blue ribbon plants need no supplemental irrigation at all.



Left to right: 'Miss Huff' lantana, crapemyrtle, and 'Homestead Purple' verbena are all blue ribbon plants.

Characteristics of the Blue Ribbon Annuals

- ✿ Perform the same way every year (dependable).
- ✿ Require little to no trimming
- ✿ Are very well adjusted to the southern environment, including high heat and humidity
- ✿ Live a long life (at least the four to six months of your growing season)
- ✿ Fare well with little susceptibility to pests
- ✿ Have an established record (they've been around for enough years to fully understand their requirements).
- ✿ Bloom continuously for a minimum of five to six months (except for cacti, bromeliads, and plants used primarily for leaf color).
- ✿ Need water, at the most, once or twice a week after they are established.



Red Ribbon, Almost as Easy

Red ribbon plants are not far behind the blue ribbon plants in overall performance. The only difference is that red ribbon plants require more care - up to three chores per year, if they are planted, watered, and fertilized correctly. Some may have susceptibility to pests and require occasional deadheading. Red ribbon plants may be watered up to twice a week.

Characteristics of the Red Ribbon Perennials, Shrubs, Vines & Trees

- ❁ Require touching (trimming, deadheading, etc.) no more than three times per year
- ❁ Are very well adjusted to the southern climate (years with droughts as well as normal or above normal rainfall).
- ❁ Have an established record (they've been around for enough years to fully understand their requirements).
- ❁ Need water, at the most, once or twice a week.



Above: Hydrangeas are red ribbon plants because they require more water than blue ribbon plants. Home of Mrs. Melba Pearson, Louisville, Mississippi.

Left: Hydrangeas at the home of John and Carol Mitchell, Louisville, Mississippi.

Characteristics of the Red Ribbon Annuals

- ❁ Perform the same way every year (dependable).
- ❁ Adjust well to most climates
- ❁ Require trimming every month or so
- ❁ Have a long lifespan, at least the four to six months of our growing season
- ❁ May have some susceptibility to pests
- ❁ Have an established record (it takes many years on the market for a plant to be a reliable success).
- ❁ Bloom continuously for a minimum of five to six months (except for cacti and bromeliads or plants used primarily for leaf color).

Easiest Plants in this Book

All of the 127 blue ribbon plants in this book are easy, but which are the easiest of the bunch? And which can live on rainwater? The plants on these two pages combine both very low water and very low care requirements. Granted, things can change. The south could turn into a desert. New plant diseases could wipe out whole species. Who knows what the future will bring? But for now, these are the best bets for serial plant killers, people who don't want to do much work, and people who live in areas with little water.

Maintenance Time: Almost Nothing

About the only way you can kill these trees is to plant them incorrectly (see pages 32 to 33) or give them poor drainage (see pages 28 to 29). They grow well in almost any soil, live on rainwater, and seldom need trimming. These nine are not currently susceptible to any serious pests or diseases.

Most of these trees lose their leaves once a year, which requires raking if you have grass underneath them. Why not forgoe the grass? Plant easy, low water shrubs underneath, and just mulch for groundcover. This way, you don't even have to rake the leaves, unless they fall on your drive or walk.

Remember that trees can cut your power bills by 50 percent if you shade 50 percent of your roof.



Maintenance Time: About One Minute Per Year

We have had junipers in our trial gardens for about three years. We have never touched them - no water, no fertilizer, no trimming, no spraying. The only reason you might need a minute a year for your junipers is to fertilize them if your soil needs it. The only way you can kill junipers (other than running them over with your car) is to plant them in a location with poor drainage. See pages 28 to 29 for information about how to avoid that.



No Irrigation,* Little Care

Maintenance Time: About Two Minutes Per Year

These plants are incredibly easy and only require about two minutes of care a year, either fertilization or trimming. And, like the other plants on these two pages, they live on rainwater after establishment except in the most extreme conditions. Many of these plants have long bloom periods. Abelia blooms for about six months and crapemyrtle for about two to three months. See the individual plant profiles for more information.



Abelia
Profile: Page 194

3' to 10' tall
Light shade - sun



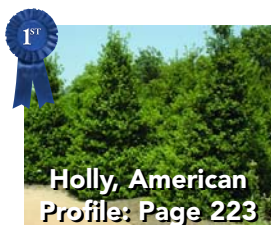
Crapemyrtle
Profile: Page 274

3' - 25' tall
Sun



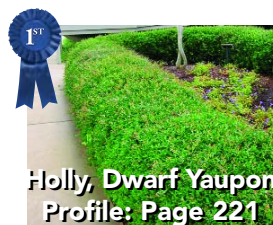
European Fan Palm
Profile: Page 301

5' - 10' tall
Light shade - sun



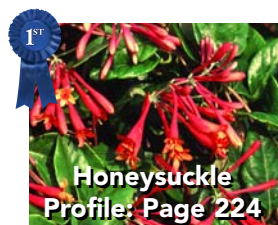
Holly, American
Profile: Page 223

12' - 30' tall
Light shade - sun



Holly, Dwarf Yaupon
Profile: Page 221

2' - 5' tall
Light shade - sun



Honeysuckle
Profile: Page 224

10' - 20' tall
Light shade - sun



Japanese Kerria
Profile: Page 238

4' - 6' tall
Light shade - sun



Smoke Tree
Profile: Page 306

8' - 12' tall
Sun



Yucca
Profile: Page 260

2' - 3' tall
Light shade - sun

Maintenance Time: About Five Minutes Per Year

These plants are also incredibly easy, only requiring about five minutes of care a year, either for fertilization or trimming. And, like the other plants on these two pages, they live on rainwater after establishment except in the most extreme conditions. Loropetalum is the only plant in this book that has color all year (from its leaves). Lantana 'Miss Huff' blooms for about five months per year. Spiraea and 'Chinese Snowball' viburnum are traffic-stopping plants that look like they would require tons of maintenance, but they don't. See the individual plant profiles for more information.



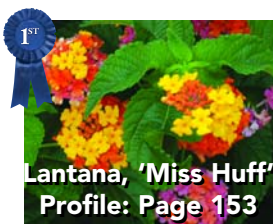
Daffodils
Profile: Page 126

6" - 16" tall
Sun (in winter)



Grass, 'Hameln'
Profile: Page 138

2' - 2.5' tall
Light shade - sun



Lantana, 'Miss Huff'
Profile: Page 153

3' - 4' tall
Light shade - sun



Lily, 'Naked Ladies'
Profile: Page 160

18" - 24" tall
Light shade - sun



Loropetalum
Profile: Page 238

2' - 15' tall
Light shade - sun



**Spiraea
'Bridalwreath'**
Profile: Page 248

6' - 8' tall
Light shade - sun



**Viburnum
'Chinese Snowball'**
Profile: Page 252

8' - 12' tall
Light shade - sun



Wax Myrtle
Profile: Page 256

4' - 20' tall
Light shade - sun

**Lives on rainwater after establishment in all but the most extreme conditions.*

Take This Book with You...

BUDGET GARDENING TIPS:

SAVE MONEY ON PLANTS

✿ Buy the smallest size you can. A shrub in a one-gallon pot costs about 1/3 as much as the same shrub in a 3 gallon pot.

✿ Buy annuals in multi-packs. We like the 18 packs the best. The roots of the plants are about three inches across. The same plant in a four inch pot is at least twice as much money! And it only takes about a week for the smaller plants to grow as large as the more expensive ones!

✿ Seeds are the cheapest way to buy new plants. Buy and old book from a used book supplier called 'Park's Success with Seeds' by Ann Reilly. It will only cost a few dollars and is the best book we know for fast and easy success with seeds.

✿ In each individual plant profile (chapters 2 to 4), we explain how to propagate the plant. In most instances, it's easy! Learn how to root cuttings, and you will have a gorgeous garden for nothing!

✿ Trade with your neighbors. Have everyone divide their perennials, trade with each other at a block party, and color your neighborhood!

✿ Look for local gardening events. Often, home growers sell plants really cheaply.

✿ Abandoned properties that are scheduled to be cleared can be great places to find plants. Be sure to get permission from the owner. Check with your local city hall to find out how to find the owner's name.

✿ Space plants correctly. Each plant profile (chapter 2 to 4) tells you the proper spacing. If you plant them too close, you waste a lot of money. For example, it takes 4 times as many plants for 1 foot spacing than for 2 foot spacing.

Take this book with you when you go to garden centers. After seeing a plant that interests you, check the index to find the appropriate pages. The information can save you a lot of time, frustration, and money. This book not only covers the great plants but also describes many of the not-so-great ones as well. We don't want you to make the same mistakes we did!

Some Plants Won't Meet Your Expectations

Pamela Crawford (one of the authors of this book) purchased gerber daisies, thinking they would bloom throughout her growing season, or at least six months or so. Not so. They bloomed for a month and never even set another bud. She thought she had done something wrong until she found out that gerber daisies are supposed to only bloom for a month. Had she known that, she would have bought one plant instead of the six she planted in a container for \$4 each!

But the label didn't say how long the plant bloomed, and the garden center lady told her she thought they bloomed for months. She was wrong.

She had the same experience with the kalanchoe. It looked great the day she planted it but only stayed in bloom for about a month.

Many garden center personnel are encyclopedias of plant knowledge. Others are novices in gardening.

The hardest information to find is how long the plant blooms. So take this book with you. The plant you are looking for may not be here, but chances are it will.

If you see a plant you like that is not in this book, by all means ask the garden center personnel. Be sure to ask if they have any personal experience with the plant.

Name Confusion

Zinnias are widely planted in the south. Some (right, top) look great in the pot at the garden center but are very susceptible to disease and won't look very good in your garden for long.

On the other hand, 'Profusion' zinnias (right, bottom) are blue ribbon plants, and are labeled with their name at the garden centers. They have consistently bloomed for six month periods in our trial gardens with no care other than water! Take this book with you so you can check out all the plants you buy before you plant them!



When You Shop for Plants.

Great Plants That are Hit or Miss



One of the most popular annuals in the south are petunias. We tried eight different varieties of trailing petunias in our Georgia trial gardens, and they all did beautifully. We've had great luck with some of the Wave petunias from Pan American Seed as well as the Supertunias from Proven Winners (shown left, at one of their growing facilities in Vancouver).

So, why aren't they blue ribbon plants? Several reasons:

- ❁ Many petunias sold today are unnamed. The label just says 'Petunia.' Quite a few of these died on us. We're afraid if we class them as the best of the best, you might end up with one of these bad ones and be quite disappointed.

Many other blue ribbon plants are also sold as unnamed plants, but the species are so strong that all of them do well. Wax begonias and impatiens are both examples of this - they are almost foolproof - named or unnamed.

- ❁ One of the most important criteria for blue ribbon annuals is at least a four to six month lifespan. Most petunias won't last that long, particularly if the weather is quite hot.

Erratic Performers



Calibrachoa, or million bells, is one of the hottest and prettiest plants in container gardening. However, when they are good, they are very, very good; but when they are bad, they are awful!

We're not sure why. Probably, some of the new ones haven't been tried in certain climates and might not like it there. Eventually, they will sort themselves out.

We frequently use calibrachoa in our Georgia trial gardens because we really like the plant. Sometimes, it is fantastic, other times not.

Once again, take this book with you to your garden center so you will have a better shot at assessing your risk with certain plants. In many instances, they are so inexpensive that cost is not an issue. However, it is important that both new gardeners and serial plant killers have successful gardening experiences. So, stick with the blue ribbon plants if you fall into either of those categories.

New Plants

New plants as well as new cultivars and varieties of old plants are showing up by the thousands. Between our test garden in Georgia and Huntsville Botanical Garden, we have tested many of these new plants. Many are really superior to older varieties - more flowers, longer bloom period, etc. Others are not so great. We have written about lots of them in chapters two to five. Take this book with you to make plant shopping much easier.

Planting

When to Plant

It is best to plant shrubs, trees, and perennials in fall or winter because they require less water during these cooler periods. Also, cooler temperatures are less stressful for the plants than summer heat. The roots of plants installed in fall continue to develop most of the winter, even when the tops of the plants aren't growing. However, most garden centers sell perennials and blooming shrubs when they are flowering, which could be June. You can plant most plants from containers anytime, but it will take more water to establish them. Annuals, some bulbs, and some other plants can't be planted in fall or winter. Check each individual plant profile for specifics.

Spacing the Plants Appropriately

Spacing plants appropriately is very important. We have the proper spacing listed on each individual plant profile. Plants need room for their roots to expand as well as room for their branches to grow long enough to bloom or fruit. They also need to be far enough away from a building to allow for cleaning and painting. Understand the mature plant size (also detailed in the plant profiles), and place the plant so it will be two to three feet away from a building when it is mature.

Space plants according to their mature size to reduce competition for water. Overcrowding increases the need for water in that area. It may also increase bugs and diseases.

If you follow proper spacing guidelines, your garden may appear bare on planting day. Fill in with annuals for the first season if this open space bothers you.



These panicle hydrangeas should be planted six to eight feet on center (from center to center). With new plants fresh from the nursery, the bed may look bare but the proper spacing will pay off in the long run. If these hydrangeas are planted closer together, they would never look this good. Photo from Huntsville Botanical Garden

Planting Trees or Large, Single Shrubs from Containers

Since tree and shrub roots quickly grow beyond your soil amendments, most soils (including clay) are not amended prior to planting individual trees or shrubs. Dig a hole three to four times the width of the root ball, to a depth of one inch less than the height of the pot. We use a tape measure to make this faster. Loosen up the soil that has been removed. It could be quite solid, especially if you are in a new home. Heavy equipment driving over clay will turn it quite hard. Since roots have a hard time growing through that, loosen up the removed soil so that it has a good, soft consistency. If it is not loosened up, the tree will have a hard time growing into the existing soil. (See page 28 for info on checking and fixing drainage problems.)

Do not add organic matter to the holes of large shrubs or trees. It acts as a sponge, absorbing all the water. The roots of the plants have more trouble growing away from the sponge. Roots can also suffocate in wet, waterlogged soil, which is a leading cause of plant death in the south.

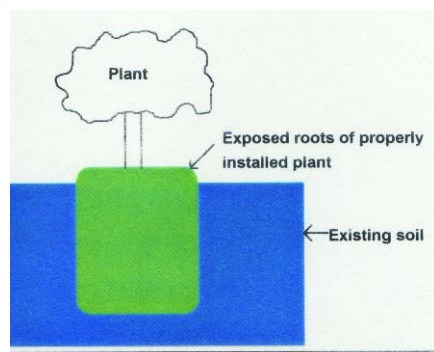
Remove the plant from its container. If the roots are growing in a circular shape around the root ball, rake your hand up the side to loosen them up. Set the plant in the middle of the hole and check to see that it is at the right depth. The top of the root ball should be one inch above the level of the surrounding soil. Fill in around the root ball half way up to the top. Water thoroughly until you see no more bubbles coming up from the bottom. Fill in to the top of the hole, and water again. Fill in where the soil settles. The goal is to remove any air bubbles from the soil.

Be sure the root ball is slightly out of the ground, and no soil is piled up around the stem (a really fast way to kill your tree!). Fertilize if it is spring or summer with the slow-release product described on page 47. Do not fertilize in fall or winter. Mulch according to the instructions on page 38.

Planting Balled and Burlapped Trees

Planting balled and burlapped trees is exactly like planting trees from containers (as described above) except for handling the burlap. Do not remove it because it keeps the roots together and naturally rots in the soil after planting. Set the tree in the hole with the burlap intact. Cut the twine or string, so you can fold back the burlap on top of the plant to see the location of the top of the root ball is, as well as where the trunk comes out of the ground. Proceed with filling around the roots the same way you would with a containerized tree (see previous page).

Planting Annuals, Perennials, and Shrubs in Prepared Beds



After your soil is prepared, planting is fairly easy, if your soil is soft. If it is rocky, digging can be difficult, so sharpen the edge of your shovel (with an electric grinder sold at home improvement stores) or rent a mechanical digging tool. Dig a hole slightly wider and one inch shallower than the root ball. Take the plant out of the pot. If any roots are circling, loosen them slightly, so they can grow straight into the soil and not in a circle. This step is very important, especially for annuals. Their roots are often so tight, the root ball looks white! If they are not loosened, the plant won't grow much. Place the plant in the hole. Fill in the sides with the same soil. Do not put any additional soil on top of the root ball. It should be slightly out of the ground, as shown in the diagram. The major

cause of plant death is planting the plant too deep. Soil piled up on top of the root ball and covering the stem can kill the plant. Water the plant, so the soil is settled in the hole and there are no air pockets. If you see bubbles coming from the soil you used to fill in around the roots, there are still air pockets.



Scaevola, Fan Flower

CHARACTERISTICS

Plant Type: Tropical perennial used as an annual in the south.

Average Size: About 6 inches tall by 12 to 18 inches wide.

Growth Rate: Medium

Leaf: Medium green, oblong, and pointed.

Flower: Small flowers shaped like a fan.

Lifespan: Lives for an entire growing season in the south.

Origin: Australia

Spacing: About 12 inches on center (measure from the center of each plant). Closer in containers.

Cautions: Rabbits love them!

Colors: Blue or white

Excellent annual for southern gardens. Blooms all season with very little care. Butterflies love it! Blue ribbon* plant because of its long bloom period and ease of care.



Scaevola is a fabulous container plant, never failing in over six years of trials in our test gardens. It blooms all spring, summer, and fall, never taking a break. Scaevola is a bit pickier about performing well when planted in the ground, however. If it is a year of average or below average rainfall (20 to 50 inches), scaevola does incredibly well. But, it cannot take either too much rain (60 inches plus) or poor drainage when planted in the ground. Scaevola also takes heat beautifully. It breezed through a ten day run of 100 degree plus temperatures in our Georgia trial gardens.

Scaevola takes longer to get going than most other annuals. Don't expect it to grow and thrive until it has been planted for about three weeks. We have noticed it going into a wilt shortly after planting, even if the soil is moist. Don't give it extra water (unless it stays in a wilt for more than a day or two) and it will perk up shortly.

Regional Differences: Does equally well throughout the south

Bloom Time: Spring through fall, continuously

Buying Tips: We have never had any problems with scaevola. Every one we have bought (several different cultivars) has excelled in our gardens.



1



2

1. *Scaevola* 'Whirlwind Blue'

2. *Scaevola* 'Whirlwind White'



Companions: Blue scaevola needs bright companions if it is to be viewed from a distance. Yellow melampodium and red salvia are ideal companions for distance viewing. Or, blue and yellow works well together, like blue scaevola and yellow lantana.

However, if you are planting scaevola in a location to be viewed from up close, try using other shapes of blue flowers accented with leaf color, as shown below.



Blue Salvia
Plant Profile: Page 86

'Dark Star' Coleus
Plant Profile: Page 68

Dark Blue Petunia
Plant Profile: Page 84

Blue scaevola and some companion plants

Blue Salvia (above, left) looks good with scaevola if some leaf color is added to punch it up a bit. Plant the salvia as the largest layer and border it with scaevola.

'Dark Star' Coleus (above, center) can be added on either side of the salvia. Lime coleus will look good with the grouping as well.

Dark Blue Petunias (above, right) work well in a container planting when added to the other plants shown above. Plant the salvia in the middle and some coleus on either side. Alternate the scaevola and the petunias around the edge of the container. Place the container in light shade to full sun.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Light: Sun to light shade

Water: Medium. Once or twice a week after establishment. Requires more water in containers.

Soil: For the garden, plant in any fertile, well-drained soil that has been enriched with organic matter. Use only good-quality potting mix for containers. See page 30 for specific instructions on soil preparation.

Hardiness: Not tolerant of freezes

Propagation: Seeds or cuttings

Pest Problems: No serious insect or disease problems.

PLANTING & MAINTENANCE

When to Plant: Spring or summer

Trimming: None required

Fertilization: Use the fertilizer described on page 47 only on planting day.

UNIVERSITY AWARDS

1997: Mississippi Medallion Winner ('New Wonder Scaevola').

1997: Georgia Gold Medal Winner.



Our favorite scaevola container combines it with salvia and creeping jenny. Container and column from www.kinsmangarden.com.



Coreopsis, Threadleaf

CHARACTERISTICS

Plant Type: Deciduous perennial (dies back in winter).

Average Size: 18 inches tall by 12 to 18 inches wide.

Growth Rate: Medium

Leaf: Tiny, thread-like green leaves

Flower: Flat daisy-like blossoms with a tuft of yellow stamens in the centers.

Origin: Southeastern US

Spacing: About 18 inches on center (measure from the center of each plant). Closer in containers.

Cautions: Attracts bees, but seldom damaged by deer.

Flower Colors: Yellow

These easy, sun-loving flowers rebloom repeatedly all summer. The 'Moonbeam' cultivar won the Perennial Plant Association's 'Plant of the Year' award. Soft texture for the perennial garden. Blooms for months with very little care.



Coreopsis 'Moonbeam'

Coreopsis is one of the ten best-selling perennials. There are many different types, but most of our experience has been with threadleaf coreopsis, which differs from the rest because of its tiny, needle-like leaves. Threadleaf coreopsis has the reputation for being one of the toughest of all of them and blooms for quite a while with no attention at all other than weekly watering. Many of the other kinds of coreopsis require frequent deadheading (removal of dead flowers) to keep blooming. Two of the best performers are pictured here: 'Moonbeam' (above), which is the best-known, and 'Zagreen' (opposite) which is sure to please. 'Moonbeam' won the Perennial Plant of the Year award in 1992.

Regional Differences: Perfectly adapted to the inland south, coreopsis may lack vigor in the coastal south in unusually rainy years.

Color Period: May or June through July, with a final flush of flowers in the fall. The best varieties bloom for three months or more.

Buying Tips: Threadleaf coreopsis doesn't look great in a nursery pot, as it is a bit thin and floppy when in a container. It does beautifully after it has been planted for just a short time.





Attracts Butterflies



Southern Native

14

Avg. Weeks of Color

Botanical Name: *Coreopsis verticillata*

Family: Asteraceae

Companions: Grow coreopsis with other perennials that take baking sun, such as agastache and scabiosa. Since coreopsis is so fine-textured, the larger agastache and scabiosa flowers show up well with it.

The combination below shows coreopsis with 'Big Sky Twilight' coneflower and 'Homestead Purple' verbenas. The three fit together well as three layers of different heights. And, with internet shopping, you can now find all these plants, even if you can't locate them at your local garden center.



'Zagreen' coreopsis with some companions that form easy color layers

'Big Sky Twilight' Coneflower (above, left) is an excellent choice as a background for threadleaf coreopsis. The textures of the plants are quite different, they both like sun, and they share the same bloom period. This coneflower grows to about 30 inches tall. Place the 18 inch coreopsis in front of it.

'Homestead Purple' Verbena (above, right) blooms for the entire warm season, from spring until fall. And, like the coreopsis, it loves sun. Use this low-growing (about a foot tall) verbenas as a front border for the coneflowers and the coreopsis. This hot combo will stop traffic in your neighborhood!

GROWING CONDITIONS

Light: Full sun, at least 6 hours per day.

Water: Low after establishment. Likes water every week or two during the growing season, depending on its environment. Blooms are reduced with too much water, but takes water up to twice a week well.

Soil: Very well-drained soil that has been enriched with organic matter. Coreopsis does very well in heavy clay soil provided it is not compacted.

Hardiness: Zones 3 to 9

Propagation: The best coreopsis are propagated from rooted cuttings taken in spring or by digging and dividing large clumps.

Pest Problems: Rare, but can develop fungus problems if overwatered.

PLANTING & MAINTENANCE

When to Plant: Coreopsis from containers can be planted anytime. Fall is best because they establish easier in cooler weather, but you are more likely to find them at your garden center in spring or summer, when they are blooming.

Trimming: If the plants become unsightly in late summer, cut them back to 8 to 10 inches to encourage a rebound of healthy, new growth. Cut back the dead foliage (to the ground) after it freezes in late fall or early winter.

Fertilization: Medium. Fertilize at planting time and each spring with a timed-release product (page 47). Less fertilizer is needed with the application of more organics.

Division: Divide every 2 to 5 years in fall or spring to maintain the vigor of the plants. The plants divided from the edges will be the healthiest. Discard the center if it appears weak.



Grasses, Medium (2 to 3 Feet Tall)

CHARACTERISTICS

Plant Type: Many grasses are deciduous (lose their leaves in winter). All of the grasses shown here are evergreen except red fountain grass, which is an annual in most of the south.

Average Size: From 6 to 36 inches tall.

Growth Rate: Varies by type

Leaf: Long, grass-like leaves

Flower: Tall upright spikes

Origin: 'Hameln' fountain grass is native to Japan and eastern Asia. Purple fountain grass is native to Africa. Purple muhly grass is native to much of the eastern US as well as Texas north to Oklahoma.

Spacing: Varies by type

Cautions: Skin irritant

Colors: Muhly grass flowers are pink or purple. White for 'Hameln' fountain grass and acorus grass. Rust for red fountain grass.



Purple fountain grass is often used in the landscape with other annuals. Here it is planted with pentas and celosia.

Grasses are the rage throughout the south, and the photo below shows why. They are gorgeous! But choosing the right ones can be tricky. Some last only one season, and some last for years. Some only require maintenance once a year, and others will take over your garden in no time. Here are some we have really liked in our trials. All rate blue ribbons.*



'Hameln' (Pennisetum alopecuroides 'Hameln'), dwarf form of green fountain grass

We have tried many grasses both in our Georgia trial gardens as well as at Huntsville Botanical Garden. The 'Hameln' fountain grass (shown above) has been quite impressive as well as useful with its small, two-to-two-and-a-half foot height. It blooms from June until September and looks quite attractive in winter as well. And, although the purple fountain grass lasts only for one season, this 'Hameln' fountain grass has been thriving at Huntsville Botanical Garden for ten years! It easily wins a blue ribbon because it requires only one chore per year: trimming. And this plant does well in the south with no irrigation after it is established. Use 'Hameln' in zones five to nine.

Regional Differences: No regional differences

Color Period: Fountain grasses bloom from June until September, but the 'Hameln' remains attractive in winter as well. Purple muhly grass flowers from August until the first frost.

Buying Tips: Garden centers are loaded with many different grasses in spring or summer. Luckily, most are labeled clearly with their names. Unfortunately, the labels won't include bad tendencies of the grasses, such as the aggressive growth that some have. Take this book with you so you can check them out.

**Blue ribbon plants are defined on page 12. For blue ribbon performance, follow the planting and maintenance guidelines on pages 28 to 46.*



Lives on Rain Water *



Southern Native *

16

Avg. Weeks of Color

Botanical Name: Varies by type

Family: Poaceae or Gramineae



Purple Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Rubrum') This fountain grass, unlike any other of the grasses on pages 136 to 141, is an annual (only living for one season) in any zone colder than zone nine. It is worth using not only because of its low cost but also because it shows up so well surrounded by other annual plantings.

The purple grass grows to about three feet tall and prefers full sun. It is commonly sold in garden centers in summer and is known for its lovely, long-lasting flowers.

We use it quite a bit as a centerpiece plant in containers, as shown left. It is surrounded by coleus. The container is the Octagon Planter, 20 inches in diameter, in creme from www.potteryalliance.com.

Purple Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) This native grass is rapidly becoming many a southerner's favorite. Its best features are its gorgeous purple or pink flowers that bloom from August until the first frost. They hover like a big, colorful, smoke-like cloud above the plant.

Its leaves are narrow and needle-like as opposed to the flat blade shape common to most grasses. The plant grows three feet tall and equally as wide. Plant it in full sun for best flowering.

This gorgeous grass has been thriving at Huntsville Botanical Garden for five years, and shows no signs of slowing down yet!

Protect the plant from cold in zone six. It does better in zones seven to nine.



*Fountain grass lives on rainwater alone in all but the most extreme situations. Purple muhly grass probably needs more water, and is the only grass on this page that is native to the south.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Light: All of these grasses grow in light shade to full sun. They flower more in full sun, at least six hours per day.

Water: Fountain grasses can live on rainwater (no irrigation) after they are established. Purple muhly grass is fairly drought-tolerant, but we have never tried it with no supplemental water at all.

Soil: For the garden, plant in any fertile, well-drained soil that has been enriched with organic matter. See pages 30 to 31 for specific instructions on soil preparation.

Hardiness: Varies by type

Propagation: Seeds or division, but many don't come true from seed.

Pest Problems: Rare

PLANTING & MAINTENANCE

When to Plant: Anytime from containers. Spring is best when planted from divisions.

Trimming: Cut it back to the ground just before new growth begins: February in zone 8, March in zone 7, and April in zone 6. Your goal is to trim off the old growth from the previous year. Don't wait too long because, if you cut back new growth that appears in spring, the tips will be blunt and discolored.

Fertilization: Low. Fertilize at planting time with a timed-release product (p. 47). Less fertilizer is needed with the application of more organics. In the years after planting, fertilization needs vary based on the nutrients in your soil.

Division: We don't divide these small grasses often because they don't spread too quickly. However, if they spread too much or you simply want more plants, dig the whole root ball out, divide it into 4 pieces and replant them in spring.



Crapemyrtle, Dwarf

CHARACTERISTICS

Plant Type: Deciduous shrub (loses its leaves in winter).

Average Size: Easily maintained at sizes between 3 to 5 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet wide.

Growth Rate: Fast

Leaf: Deep green with shades of red, 2 inches long by 1 inch wide. Nice fall color, turning yellow to bright red, depending on cultivar.

Flower: Frilly, crepe-paper like

Origin: China

Spacing: About 3 to 4 feet on center (measure from the center of each plant). Closer in containers.

Cautions: Almost never damaged by deer.

Colors: Flowers are red, pink, white, or lavender.

One of the top flowering shrubs for the south. Blooms for 90 to 120 days during the heat of summer. Great color impact with almost no maintenance. Lives without irrigation. Easily rates a blue ribbon.*



'Victor' crapemyrtle hedge at Huntsville Botanical Garden, where it has been growing for 16 years.

Most southerners are familiar with crapemyrtle trees, which are one of the best flowering trees for the south. New, dwarf crapemyrtles grow smaller and into shrubs instead of trees. They are incredibly easy to grow and offer a long bloom period. Crapemyrtles are also quite dependable - blooming through both wet and dry years.

Regional Differences: No differences in zones seven to nine in the south. In zone six, die-back occurs at minus 10 degrees.

Color Period: Varies some from year to year. They start blooming in July, when they have the highest intensity of color. In August, they continue blooming, but the seed pods are forming, so they don't have quite as much color. If you trim the seed pods, they should continue blooming through September.

Buying Tips: We have had the longest period of experience with the 'Victor' crapemyrtle, shown above. It has done very well for 16 years. Another, called 'Pokomoke,' also does well. New, more compact varieties promise even more flowering. We have just started testing 'Cherry Dazzle,' which did beautifully its first year.



1



2



3



4

1. 'Dazzle Me Pink'
2. 'Raspberry Dazzle'
3. 'Snow Dazzle'
4. Fall color on leaves of 'Raspberry Dazzle.'



Attracts Butterflies



Resists Deer



Lives on Rain Water* Avg. Weeks of Color

23

Botanical Name: *Lagerstroemia indica*

Family: Lythraceae

Companions: Since crapemyrtles bloom for so long (July until September), there are many other shrubs and perennials that flower at the same time. Altheas are a particularly nice background plant for crapemyrtle. 'Miss Huff' lantana fits well in front of the crapemyrtle and blooms for even longer (June until October).

For easy color layers, plant re-blooming daylilies and scabiosa in front of crapemyrtle, as shown below.



'Stella de Oro' Daylily
Plant Profile: Page 128

Scabiosa
Plant Profile: Page 176

'Cherry Dazzle' crapemyrtle and some companions.

'Stella de Oro' Daylily (top left) is one of the longest blooming perennial daylilies, blooming for up to three months each summer. Its 18 to 24 inch height fits well in front of the taller crapemyrtles. Plant both in full sun for most blooms.

Scabiosa (above, right) is another one of the longest-blooming perennials for the south, flowering from May until September if you dead-head (remove dead flowers). It grows 12 to 18 inches tall, so use it as a front border for the taller crapemyrtle and daylilies.

**Lives on rainwater alone in all but the most extreme situations.*

GROWING CONDITIONS

Light: Full sun, at least 6 hours per day. The number one reason crapemyrtles don't flower is too much shade.

Water: Very low after establishment. Likes water every week or two during the growing season, depending on its environment, but lives without irrigation after it is established. See pages 34 to 37 for more information.

Soil: Any fertile, well-drained soil that has been enriched with organic matter. Requires good drainage. See pages 28 to 31 for instructions.

Hardiness: Zones 6 to 10, but occasionally damaged in zone 6 if the temperatures fall below -10 degrees.

Propagation: Seeds or cuttings

Pest Problems: Rare. Root rot can develop if plants are kept too wet.

PLANTING & MAINTENANCE

When to Plant: Crapemyrtles from containers can be planted at any time. Fall is best because they establish easier in cooler weather, but you are more likely to find them at your garden center in summer, when they are blooming.

Trimming: Two choices:

1. Cut the whole shrub back to the ground in late winter. It will only grow about 2 to 3 feet tall the next season.

2. Cut it back to the ground every few years if you want it to grow taller.

Fertilization: Low. Fertilize at planting time with a timed-release product (page 47). Less fertilizer is needed with the application of more organics. In the years after planting, fertilization needs vary, based on the nutrients in your soil.



Rose, 'Knock Out'

CHARACTERISTICS

Plant Type: Evergreen shrub in Zones 7 to 9. Deciduous shrub in Zones 5 and 6 (loses its leaves in winter).

Average Size: Easily maintained at sizes between 4 feet tall by 4 feet wide and 8 feet tall by 8 feet wide.

Growth Rate: Fast

Leaf: Deep green to bronzy purple on new growth. 3 inches long by 2 inches wide.

Flower: Singles have 5 to 7 overlapping petals. Doubles have 20 to 30 petals. All have yellow stamens. Flower is 3 to 3 1/2 inches wide.

Origin: Roses are originally native to China. This one was hybridized in the U.S.

Spacing: About 4 to 6 feet on center (measure from the center of each plant).

Cautions: Frequently damaged by deer. Be careful of thorns.

Colors: See opposite page for flower colors.



'Double Knock Out' rose

This shrub blooms the longest with the least amount of care of any shrub in this book. Good color from spring til hard frost. The 'Knock Outs' take the maintenance out of roses. Rates a red ribbon* because of Japanese beetle attacks, but the shrub recovers quickly from the damage.



If you have ever been surprised by a plant - this is it! In the past, many have thought that roses were just too much work. The 'Knock Out' roses changed all the rules. They are low maintenance, carefree shrubs that require no deadheading and little spraying, fertilizing, or trimming. And, they bloom continuously from spring until the first heavy frost. They have taken the blue ribbon prize at the Huntsville Botanical Garden as a spectacular show stopper, blooming for the last five to six years in front of an 80 foot wood fence. The only limitation is that they do not produce a long stemmed rose suitable for cutting. Another negative about this rose is its susceptibility to Japanese beetles. If you live in an area that the beetles frequent, expect to see holes in the leaves and half-eaten flowers in early to mid summer unless you plan to spray. However, the shrub is such a vigorous grower that new growth hides the holes shortly after the beetles leave in mid summer.

Regional Differences: Hardy through zone five. Evergreen in zones seven through nine. Deciduous in zones five and six.

Color Period: Continuous from April until hard frost. Tolerates light freezes.

Buying Tips: Garden centers are carrying several of the cultivars that are clearly tagged. They are also available on-line.

**Red ribbon plants are defined on page 13. For blue ribbon performance, follow the planting and maintenance guidelines on pages 30 to 49.*



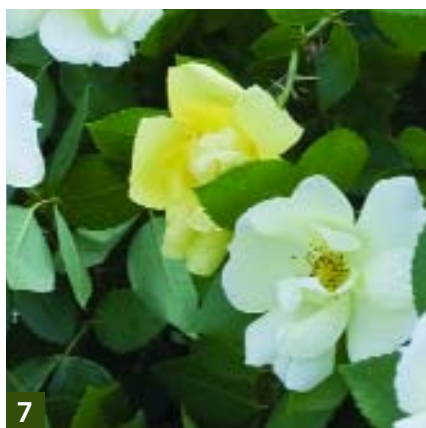
Attracts Butterflies

31

Avg. Weeks of Color

Botanical Name: *Rosa* spp.

Family: Rosaceae



1. 'Knock Out' rose
2. 'Double Knock Out' rose
3. 'Pink Knock Out' rose
4. 'Pink Double Knock Out' rose
5. 'Rainbow Knock Out' rose
6. 'Blushing Knock Out' rose
7. 'Sunny Knock Out' rose

At Huntsville Botanical Garden the single red variety (simply called 'Knock Out' rose) is the most vigorous bloomer, with 'Rainbow' the least prolific.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Light: Full sun to light shade

Water: Medium after establishment. Likes water once or twice a week during the growing season, depending on its environment. See pages 34 to 37 for more information. Has been known to grow without irrigation, depending on rainfall amounts and its individual environment.

Soil: For the garden, plant in any fertile, well-drained soil that has been enriched with organic matter. Use only good-quality potting mix for containers. See pages 28 to 31 for specific instructions on soil preparation.

Hardiness: Zones 5 to 9

Propagation: Prohibited; plants are currently patented.

Pest Problems: Japanese beetles may be a problem for about 3 to 4 weeks. They eat the leaves and flowers. The plants are so vigorous that they quickly replace the damaged flowers and leaves as soon as the beetles leave in mid summer. Black spot and powdery mildew are almost non-existent. Plant will tolerate downy mildew, which is seldom seen in the south.

PLANTING & MAINTENANCE

When to Plant: Roses from containers can be planted at any time. Fall is best because they establish easier in cooler weather, but you are more likely to find them at your garden center in early spring and summer.

Trimming: Once a year in late winter to early spring. Reduce the plant size by one half.

Fertilization: Medium. Fertilize at planting time and each spring with a timed-release product. Less fertilizer is needed with the application of more organics. See pages 46 to 49 for more instructions.



Carolina Silverbell

CHARACTERISTICS

Plant Type: Deciduous tree (loses its leaves in the winter).

Average Size: 20 to 30 feet tall by 15 to 25 feet wide. Occasionally, it grows as tall as 70 feet tall, but that is very unusual.

Growth Rate: Medium

Leaf: Oval to elliptical leaves, 4 to 5 inches long by 2 to 3 inches wide. Dark green on top and lighter green on the bottom. Slightly hairy on the bottom as well. Yellow fall color.

Flower: White, 1 inch long, drooping bells with a yellow center. 3 to 5 flowers in each cluster.

Origin: Southeastern US, from Virginia to Florida on the east side, and west to Oklahoma. These trees only occur naturally in ecosystems called Appalachian cove forests. They adapt well to suburban landscapes throughout the south.

Spacing: About 20 feet on center (measure from the center of each plant).

Cautions: Seldom damaged by deer.

Colors: White flowers. Leaves are green in summer and yellow in fall.

Outstanding, small, native tree for the home landscape. Beautiful spring flowers followed by dark green foliage make this an excellent selection for a woodland garden or small lawn tree. Nice fall color as well. Easily wins a blue ribbon* because of its ease of care.



Carolina silverbell underplanted with tulips

Silverbell produces a rounded, oval crown that is attractive as an understory planting or as a specimen in a small yard. In spring, the flower clusters of pure white jump out at you as you walk through the woods or see it in an open location. Blooming after the flowering cherries and dogwood, this tree provides an extension of spring color in our landscape. As a lawn tree, grass can be grown underneath, since the root system is not as extensive as many other trees. Dark gray bark with subtle stripping makes an attractive winter silhouette.

Regional Differences: None

Color Period: Blooms for two to three weeks starting in late March in zone eight, mid April in zone seven, and late April in zone six. Leaves usually turn yellow for about two weeks in fall, but this color change depends on temperatures and rainfall.

Buying Tips: If you can't find this tree at your local garden center, shop for it online.

**Blue ribbon plants are defined on page 12. For blue ribbon performance, follow the planting and maintenance guidelines on pages 28 to 49.*



Attracts Birds



Southern Native

4

Avg. Weeks of Color

Botanical Name: *Halesia tetraptera* (*Halesia carolina*)

Family: Styracaceae

Companions: Other spring-blooming, native plants, like azaleas, and woodland phlox, make excellent companions, as shown below.



Carolina silverbell and some companions

Native Azaleas (above, left) usually bloom at the same time as the Carolina silverbell and do well in the shade beneath the tree. The azaleas grow from six to twelve feet tall. Plant them on either side of the taller tree, taking care that they stay in light shade.

Woodland Phlox (above, right) is another plant that blooms in early spring. Since the phlox stays low (about 12 to 16 inches tall), use it as a border for the Carolina silverbell and azaleas. It also works well as a groundcover under the tree. All of these plants do well in light shade.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Light: Light shade to full sun

Water: Low after establishment. Likes water every week or two during the growing season, depending on its environment. See pages 34 to 37 for more information.

Soil: Grows in unimproved soil, including clay, provided the soil has not been compacted. Compaction occurs most commonly from heavy equipment working around a house under construction. See pages 28 to 29 for instructions on improving drainage and pages 32 to 33 for information regarding tree planting.

Hardiness: Zones 4 to 8

Propagation: Seeds

Pest Problems: None serious

PLANTING & MAINTENANCE

When to Plant: Carolina silverbells from containers can be planted at any time. Fall is best because even container specimens establish easier in cooler weather. Balled and burlapped trees are best planted in fall.

Trimming: This tree seldom requires trimming, only occasionally to shape the crown.

Fertilization: Low. Fertilize at planting time with a timed-release product. Less fertilizer is needed with the application of more organics. In the years after planting, fertilization needs vary, based on the nutrients in your soil. See pages 46 to 49 for more information.



Ginkgo

CHARACTERISTICS

Plant Type: Deciduous tree (loses its leaves in the winter).

Average Size: 50 to 80 feet tall by 30 to 40 feet wide.

Growth Rate: Slow

Leaf: Very unusual, fan-shaped leaves measuring 2 to 3 inches long by 2 to 3 inches wide. They occur in clusters of 3 to 5 and are a rich emerald-green color, changing to vibrant golden yellow in fall.

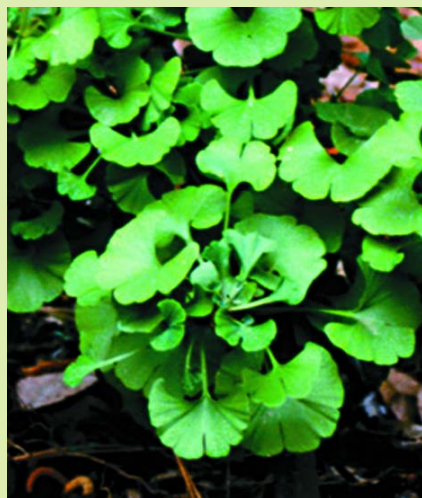
Flower: Male and female flowers are on separate trees. Both are small and inconspicuous. However, you want to select a male plant, since the seeds of the female have a foul odor.

Origin: China

Spacing: About 40 to 50 feet on center (measure from the center of each plant).

Cautions: Poisonous. Do not eat this plant. Also, sap or juice can be a skin irritant. Odors from female seeds is objectionable (see 'Buying Tips,' right). Almost never damaged by deer.

Colors: Flowers are insignificant. Leaves are green in summer, turning golden yellow in fall.



A fall day in the presence of a golden ginkgo is truly evidence of nature's handiwork. To see a blanket of gold resting upon a fresh green carpet of grass looks more like a painting than something that nature provides. Rates a blue ribbon* because of its ease of care.



When choosing a ginkgo, make sure you buy a named cultivar, so you are positive you have a male tree. The smell from the seeds of a female is memorable and not in a good way. Growth habit and fall color are the basis for cultivar selection, and several make excellent choices. Ginkgos are slow growers but become large trees, so give them room to grow. If space is a factor, try 'Princeton Sentry,' a narrow, columnar tree that does not have a large spread. Ginkgos are not particular about soil and have proven to be excellent urban trees if given space to grow.

Regional Differences: None

Color Period: Inconspicuous flowers in March or April for two weeks. Leaves turn golden yellow for about two weeks in fall.

Buying Tips: Look for named cultivars when purchasing a ginkgo tree. All named cultivars are male and will insure that ten years from now you're not holding your nose as you leave your house. Excellent choices include 'The President' (from the Presidents home at University of Georgia), 'Princeton Sentry' (a very narrow form), 'Autumn Gold' and 'Golden Globe.' All have wonderful, golden yellow, fall color.

**Blue ribbon plants are defined on page 12. For blue ribbon performance, follow the planting and maintenance guidelines on pages 28 to 49.*



Resists Deer



Avg. Weeks of Color

Botanical Name: *Ginkgo biloba*

Family: Ginkgoaceae

Companions: Ginkgo looks magnificent as a single specimen with a lawn growing beneath. The blanket of gold created by the falling leaves is a true, natural masterpiece.



GROWING CONDITIONS

Light: Full sun, at least 6 hours per day.

Water: Low after establishment. Likes water every week or two during the growing season, depending on its environment. See pages 34 to 37 for more information.

Soil: Grows in unimproved soil, including clay, provided the soil has not been compacted. Compaction occurs most commonly from heavy equipment working around a house under construction. See pages 28 to 29 for instructions on improving drainage and pages 32 to 33 for information regarding tree planting.

Hardiness: Zones 4 to 8

Propagation: Cuttings

Pest Problems: Rare

PLANTING & MAINTENANCE

When to Plant: Ginkgo trees from containers can be planted at any time. Fall is best because they establish easier in cooler weather. Likewise, fall is the best time for balled and burlapped ginkgos.

Trimming: Shape crown occasionally when tree is young. Remove lower branches to lift canopy as trees grow.

Fertilization: Low. Fertilize at planting time with a timed-release product. Less fertilizer is needed with the application of more organics. In the years after planting, fertilization needs vary, based on the nutrients in your soil.