

12 must plant pollinator-friendly flowers

By Melinda Myers

Fill your garden with colorful annuals you and the pollinators can enjoy all season long. Look for outstanding varieties chosen by All-America Selections (AAS), a nonprofit plant trialing organization, to brighten your garden, attract pollinators and outperform other varieties on the market.

Attract hummingbirds and second looks from passersby with the vibrant bright orange flowers of Canna South Pacific. This compact variety can be started from seed and was selected as a 2018 AAS winner for its vigorous, full and uniform growth habit.



Echinacea PowWow Wild Berry is a perennial that provides continual bloom without deadheading or grooming. Photo/All-America Selections

Whether it's spikes of lavender, pink, white or red your garden and container need, you'll find them in the Salvia Jewel series. Watch the butterflies and hummingbirds stop by for a sip of nectar and the finches feast upon the seeds later in the season.

Add more vertical interest and pollinator appeal in the garden and large planters with Asian Garden Celosia. The bright pink blooms hold their color all season long atop sturdy stems 31- to 40-inches tall.

Include a few Cupheas, also known as Mexican Heather in containers, borders and mass plantings. FloriGlory Diana has more and larger flowers than its counterparts. The season long bloom of intense magenta flowers made this a winner.

Incorporate beauty even in challenging locations with EnduraScape Pink Bicolor Verbena. As the name implies it is tough as nails, tolerating drought, heat and temperatures in the low teens. Use this spreader in large containers and baskets where you can appreciate the soft pink blooms with their darker center.

Wow visitors and lure pollinators to your garden and containers with Vinca Mega Bloom Orchid Halo. The bright purple blooms with a white eye stand up to heat and humidity without succumbing to disease.

Grow winning varieties of a traditional favorite, zinnia. These low maintenance sun-loving annuals can be started from seed directly in the garden. Add vibrant color to the garden with Queeny Lime, Zowie! Yellow Flame and Magellan Coral. Include smaller scale beauty with Profusion and Zahara varieties.

Gardeners and pollinators love purple coneflowers (Echinacea). Two colorful winning varieties, Cheyenne Spirit and PowWow Wild Berry will fill your garden with color for seasons to come.

Cheyenne Spirit coneflower produces a mix of purple, pink, red and orange flowers along side lighter yellows, creams and white. This compact plant stands tall in wind and rain and is drought tolerant once established.

PowWow Wild Berry coneflower lives up to its name. The vivid deep rose-purple flowers retain their beautiful color all season long. You'll enjoy continual bloom without deadheading or grooming.

Add more perennial beauty with Twizzle Purple Penstemon. The spikes of vibrant purple blooms are favorites of hummingbirds and other pollinators. Include them in containers for added height or high-impact color anywhere in the landscape.

Extend your budget and increase perennial plantings next year by starting these three winners indoors by late January. Your efforts will be rewarded with flowers that same season.

Don't let shade stop you from inviting pollinators into the garden. Bounce Pink Flame Impatiens has all the flower power of common impatiens but is resistant to downy mildew. Plus, they are a bit more forgiving if you allow them to wilt. Just add water and they bounce back.

Plant Sunpatiens Spreading Shell Pink in full sun or shade. Enjoy the season long, soft pink flowers even in high heat, rain and humidity. This variety has all the low maintenance beauty of impatiens but is resistant to downy mildew.

Once you've added these beauties to your landscape, sit back and enjoy. You and the pollinators will reap the many benefits of these winning additions to your gardens and containers.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening." She hosts the Great Courses "How to Grow Anything: Food Gardening for Everyone" DVD set and the nationally syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" TV and radio segments.