

And the Winner is...
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Each year awesome new flower and vegetable varieties are selected to be “All American Selection” winners. Four annual flowers have been selected as winners for 2010. Display gardens nationwide evaluate many cultivars of flowers and vegetables each year. The closest display garden to our area is on the South Dakota State University campus at McCrory Gardens in Brookings. Display gardens are also located at North Dakota State University and International Peace Gardens in North Dakota. Cultivars selected are the best performing varieties in trials nationwide.

2010 winners are as follows; *Gaillardia x grandiflora* ‘Mesa Yellow’, *Antirrhinum majus* ‘Twinny Peach’, *Viola cornuta* ‘Endurio Sky Blue Martien’, and *Zinnia marylandica* ‘Zahara Starlight Rose’. Each of these performed exceptionally well nationwide and should prove to be good choices for home gardens in most areas.

‘Mesa Yellow’ is the first hybrid gaillardia to exhibit prolific flowering on a controlled plant habit. It has 3-inch daisy like flowers with globe shaped seed heads on a 16 to 18 inch tall mound shaped plant. Blooming two to three weeks earlier than other blanket flowers, the flowers are excellent for cutting and using in bouquets but if left on the plant attract butterflies. Due to the short stature of the plant it has proved to be wind and rain resistant by recovering quickly after severe weather.

‘Twinny Peach’ is “a snapdragon without the snap” due to its butterfly flower form, in other words it is a double flowering snapdragon. The name ‘Twinny’ meaning twin comes from the butterfly flower form. The flowers are a unique blend of peach tone colors including soft shades of peach, yellow, and light orange. No other snapdragon exhibits these colors so this one is truly unique. Grow this plant with purple foliage plants or *Salvia farinacea* for a knockout of a garden display. ‘Twinny Peach’ produces abundant flower spikes which can be cut and placed in a vase for a fresh indoor display. Plant height is under 12 inches and is easy to grow and heat tolerant.

‘Endurio Sky Blue Martien’ greets gardeners with a burst of clear blue. A wonderful viola adapted to both northern and southern location. It exhibits two-season color in northern locations as it flowers well after the first frost if planted in the autumn and again in the early spring after the snow has melted. If planted in the early spring it will bloom well into summer covering landscapes with sky blue color. Perfect for planter boxes it grows 6 inches tall with a 10-12 inch spread.

‘Zahara Starlight Rose’ is a zinnia that combines old and new all in one plant. This cultivar exhibits rose and white bicolor flowers giving new life to an old-fashioned plant. Resistant to leaf spot and mildew means that this plant will look awesome in the garden longer than other zinnias. They are heat and drought tolerant and easy to grow as they are undemanding with maximum blooms. Mature plants grow to a height of 12 to 14 inches tall and wide. Producing flowers a short 61 days after sowing these plants are perfect for novice and experienced gardeners.

Keep your eyes open for these and other new cultivars when your seed catalogs start arriving. Give some of these a try; I think you will enjoy the results. For more information on these and past AAS winners visit <http://www.all-americaelections.org>.

Contact me at 605-394-2188 if you have questions about flower gardening or other horticultural topics. If email is your thing then drop me a note at ricky.abrahamson@sdsu.edu. You can also visit us online at <http://www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html>.