

Mississippi Medallion Plants: 2011

The Mississippi Medallion program was established in 1996 by the Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) to increase awareness of plant materials and to promote sales and production of ornamental plants in Mississippi. Compared to national campaigns such as All-American Selections and Perennial Plant of the Year, the Mississippi Medallion program focuses on plants adapted to the environment in Mississippi to benefit both consumers and the green industry. This publication gives an introduction to the 2011 Mississippi Medallion Plants, which includes a Mississippi native plant, and is part of a series of publications that promote awareness of these plants.

SunPatiens®

(*Impatiens* spp.)

Characteristic: sun-tolerant impatiens



For gardeners—The name says it all: SunPatiens are impatiens for the sun. There are 15 SunPatiens cultivars including six vigorous SunPatiens (3 to 4 inches tall and wide; variegated coral, lavender, magenta, orange, red, and white), two variegated spreading SunPatiens (3 to 4 inches tall and wide; variegated white and variegated salmon), and seven compact SunPatiens (2 to 3 inches tall and wide; coral, magenta, orange, deep rose, blush pink, lilac, and white). SunPatiens® have performed very well at the Crystal Springs field trials, flowering from shortly after transplanting to frost. Sufficient water and well-drained soil are key to SunPatiens' performance in Mississippi's summer heat.

For growers—Optimum growing temperature: 68–85 °F/60–64 °F; optimum light level: 5,000 fc/53,800 lux; direct stick saving overall crop time 10–14 days or rooting in cells; root quickly without rooting hormone; avoid overmisting after sticking; potting: one plant per 4- or 6-inch pot; pH: 5.8–6.2; EC: 1.0–1.2 mmhos; pinching not recommended as it delays flowering; PGR: 1,500 ppm B-Nine to 2,500 ppm B-Nine/10 ppm Bonzi tank mix; total crop time: 7–8 weeks from direct stick for 4- to 5-inch pot to 11–12 weeks for 10-inch pot; add 1–2 weeks if grown from 2¼ liners; available from Ecke Ranch and Oro Farms.

'Aristotle' Bell Pepper

(*Capsicum annuum*)

Characteristic: vegetable

For gardeners—'Aristotle' produces green to red blocky bell peppers with thick walls. It has tremendous yield potential. 'Aristotle' has been reported to be among the best producers of green or colored bell peppers in many field trials. In one trial,

'Aristotle' produced almost 40,000 pounds/acre of blocky peppers, much more than many others, including 'King Arthur,' 'Blushing Beauty,' 'Camelot,' 'Red Knight,' and 'Paladin.' It usually takes 72–75 days from transplanting to picking the first pepper. The pepper has a nice, smooth shape, and each could weigh up to a third of a pound. Raise this pepper similarly to how you raise tomatoes, spaced 18–24 inches apart in the garden or in large pots, avoiding cold, shaded, and wet conditions.

For growers—'Aristotle' is an X3R® pepper with resistance or tolerance to several diseases, including phytophthora, bacterial spot, potato virus X, and tobacco mosaic virus. Leaves are fairly large and green, and fruit cover is good. This means the cultivar is less suitable for truly ornamental use than some



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other bell pepper cultivars, but fruit sunburn in the garden or field is minimized. Grow from seed in 72 or larger pack and pot sizes. Fertilize as for tomato seedlings. Seedling emergence is 2–3 days later than for tomatoes. In Mississippi, grow out in 72s (e.g., 1206s) is 4–5 weeks to retail bedding finish; longer in 48s, 36s, 1801s, or larger pots. Overwatering can lead to root diseases. Thrips, aphids, and whiteflies can be issues. Use only controls labeled for this edible crop.

2011 Mississippi Native Plant— Virginia Sweetspire

(*Itea virginica*)

Characteristic: native shrub, deciduous



For gardeners—Virginia sweetspire is a native shrub that does well under full sun to partial shade. The species itself could grow to 3–6 feet tall in the landscape, but the two most common cultivars, ‘Henry’s Garnet’ and ‘Little Henry’ are much shorter and more compact. Both cultivars have great reddish-purple foliage in late fall. Other cultivars include ‘Long Spire,’ ‘Merlot,’ ‘Sarah Eve,’ ‘Saturnalia,’ and ‘Shirley’s Compact.’ In June, many 4- to 6-inch inflorescences made of numerous tiny, white, fragrant, star-shaped

flowers emerge and cover the shrub. Virginia sweetspire provides great interest in the garden since it flowers when few plants are in bloom. In late fall, the foliage turns to maroonish-red. Depending on how cold it gets, the leaves may stay on throughout the winter. It is a low-maintenance shrub. The plant is hardy in zones 5–9. Suckers could be a problem—the plant has the potential to spread through adventitious roots.

For growers—Softwood cuttings root easily in 4 weeks with or without rooting hormone; use May to September cuttings, 1,000 ppm KIBA, 3 perlite: 1 peat; rooted cuttings taken early in the season could make 1-gallon plants by fall.

References

<http://www.sunpatiens.com>

Dirr, M.A. 1998. *Manual of woody landscape plants: Their identification, ornamental characteristics, culture, propagation and uses*. 5th. Stipes Publishing LLC. Champaign, IL.

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