



Annuals You Simply Must Grow This Year

When we plant flowers year after year, we develop a group of favorites. And while it's great to have a repertoire of plants we can count on to perform consistently, our gardens and containers can begin to look a little too predictable – each year just like the one before.

I challenge you to 'plant outside the box' this year with annuals that have been recently introduced or are often overlooked.

Angelonia

Angelonia, commonly called summer snapdragon, is a relative newcomer and one you simply must grow this year! They love heat and never languish in summer. Everything about Angelonia is beautiful including its stature, foliage and snapdragon-like flowers in shades of white, pink, and purple. They prefer to be planted in well-drained soil in a sunny location and appreciate a light application of a balanced granular fertilizer. Make them happy and they will reward you with an abundant supply of flowers from June to September.

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Angelonia

Calibrachoa

When choosing a plant for a hanging basket, to trail over the edge of a container, or for the front of a sunny border, give Calibrachoa a try this year. Commonly referred to as million bells, they begin to bloom in spring. Varieties introduced years ago were not amiable to summer's heat, but now we have the Cabaret series. They have excellent heat tolerance and continue blooming tirelessly all summer. Flower colors include shades of violet, blue, pink, red,

angelonias look best when magenta, yellow, bronze, and white. The best news: they do not need deadheading!

Plant calibrachoa in moderately rich, well-drained soil in full sun. They will grow satisfactorily in part shade but flowering will decrease. To maximize bloom, apply a slow-release balanced fertilizer.

Euphorbia 'Diamond Frost'

I first saw this plant at the Chicago Flower & Garden Show three years ago and was immediately infatuated. After growing it in both my garden and in containers, I have fallen in love with this plant!

It grows 18" tall and wide while producing a billowy mass of tiny, white flowers reminiscent of baby's breath. It is heat and drought-tolerant and blooms nonstop from spring to frost.

Diamond Frost Euphorbia is the best kind of neighbor. Its soft white flowers complement any plant nearby. It looks equally impressive when planted in a drift amongst other annuals or perennials or at the base of shrubs as it does in hanging baskets or containers.

Salvia guaranitica

Choose either variety of this salvia, 'Black and Blue' or 'Sapphire Blue', and the hummingbirds will flock to your yard. No other plant in my yard has attracted more hummingbirds than these two salvias.

They grow quickly up to 3' and form bushy plants with coarse green leaves. Their intense deep blue blossoms are held on bluish black stems.

the foreground and offset with contrasting foliage behind.



The tubular blooms of Salvia 'Black and Blue' attract hummingbirds.

unique streaked, spotted or color-splotched leaves. The leaves of Escargot, like its name implies, curl around themselves creating a spiral effect that looks like a snail's shell.

Fireflush is another stunning variety with unusual, eye-catching markings. Its large silvery green leaves have chocolate-colored centers and margins. Fine red hairs cover the leaves and stems.

Rex Begonia

If you haven't checked out

Plant these in well-drained soil in full sun and feed with a balanced fertilizer. These salvias perform happily in the garden, but are also nice in large mixed containers. They are best positioned in the mid-ground where their coarse foliage can be partially hidden by the plants in

these plants lately, you are missing out. Rex begonias are fairly easy to grow if you meet their basic requirements: rich soil that is moist, but not soggy and a spot with good light but no direct sun. There are many varieties of rex begonias each with their own

Be daring when you visit the garden center this spring. Take a look at these plants as well as other annuals you may not have considered before. It's good to choose past favorites - old friends that you can trust - but it is exciting to make new friends, too!