



## Coleus Adds Color to Summer Plantings

It's funny how trends come and go. Just like bellbottoms and platform shoes, plants can also experience a rise and fall in popularity.

Coleus is a prime example. I remember the vibrant colored foliage of old fashioned coleus in pots on my great grandmother's shaded porch, but these brightly colored foliage plants fell out of favor and were almost completely absent from garden centers for many years.

But coleus is back in a big way! It is now available in varieties that aren't relegated to a shady front porch, but relish a spot in the sunshine. Perfect for providing texture and tons of color to the garden or in container plantings, there is a coleus for every preference.

### Coleus for Sun

Although Dark Star is slower to establish than some, its nearly black leaves combine with almost any other coleus, and is just as stunning when combined with other annuals flowering in pink, lavender, and soft yellow as it is when partnered with red, orange, and bright yellow-blooming plants.



The vibrant colors of coleus add color to the garden all season.

A faint red line enhances the chartreuse foliage of Life Lime. A dramatic textural and color combination is created when Life Lime is partnered with Red Bor Flowering Kale.

Needlepoint has finely cut, scalloped green leaves with white centers and touches of rose. Planted with Limelight Licorice Plant (*Helichrysum* 'Limelight'), the chartreuse foliage of the licorice plant brings out the hints of chartreuse in Needlepoint.

Solar Eclipse has deeply scalloped leaves of cherry red with black margins. Plant Solar Eclipse with Sonata Carmine Cosmos. The cosmos' bright green, lacy foliage contrasts nicely with the coleus' large leaves, and its carmine daisy-like flowers highlight the rosy flecks in the foliage of the coleus.

The twisting and twirling foliage of Twist & Twirl is splashed with red, yellow, green and purple.

Twist & Twirl is especially beautiful when partnered with another coleus - Saturn. Together, they are a dynamic duo.

### Coleus for Part Sun

Copper has foliage of bright orange with hints of gold and copper. A good associate for this coleus is Landmark Citrus Lantana.

The golden leaves of Glennis are dappled with chartreuse and plum pink. The rose-pink flowers of Allure Rose Geranium emphasize the rosy speckles in Glennis' leaves.

An intricate pattern of dark red leaf centers and chartreuse margins grace the foliage of Inky Fingers. Marguerite sweet potato vine is a pleasing companion.

Peter Wonder has ruffled, cut-edged, vividly colored and patterned foliage on purple stems. Choose impatiens in any of the colors of Peter Wonder's psychedelic combination of colors for a winning collaboration.



### **Coleus for Shade**

The Kong series was introduced in 2005, offering flashy leaves on monster-sized, flamboyant plants with unbelievably large leaves. They provide dramatic color in the shady spots of your garden. The foliage of Kong Mosaic has cream-colored centers surrounded by a deep green and red irregular edge. Kong Red displays a brilliant red broad vein down the center of each leaf. Kong Rose has a vibrant rose center surrounded by a green edge.



The Wizard series is a superior group of coleus for the shade. Wizard Jade has large, bold

leaves with soft white centers fringed in bright green. The foliage of Wizard Rose has a rose-colored center surrounded by cream and then edged in bright green. The large, serrated leaves of Wizard Red have purplish-black edges with deep red centers.

### **Caring for Coleus**

Wait to plant coleus until nighttime temperatures stay above 50 degrees. Pinch out the centers of young plants to promote lateral growth and to create a bushier plant.

Fertilize with a slow-release balanced fertilizer when planting, or once a month with a balanced liquid fertilizer at half-strength. Water often enough to keep the soil moist, but not so often that the soil becomes soggy.

Pinch off flower spikes when they begin to form in mid to late summer. If they set seed, the plant will decline.

### **Coleus as Houseplants**

A coleus makes a very nice houseplant as long it gets enough light and fertilizer. Plant coleus in a light potting mix and put it in a spot where it will receive several hours of bright light every day. Water it often enough to keep the soil evenly moist. Fertilize coleus every month with a diluted liquid houseplant fertilizer. Pinch off flower buds as soon as they develop.

Join other gardeners who have already rediscovered coleus. Given their wide range of foliage color and leaf shape, there is sure to be a coleus you'll love at your local garden center.