



Stephen & Kristin Pategas

in the garden *by Stephen and Kristin Pategas*

Selections For Your Garden

Plant breeders and seed companies develop hundreds of new plants every year hoping to capture a piece of the gardening market. Often the new plants are only slight variations – and hopefully improvements – of the current plants in use. For instance, there are new varieties of petunias each year from various breeders all claiming to be new improved versions. How would garden centers and gardeners have any clue if the claims are true? Well, for 84 years there has been an independent, non-profit organization, All-America Selections (AAS) leading the way.

AAS tests new varieties of plants in impartial trials in North America, provides scoring and evaluations and then announces the best garden performers as AAS Winners. This isn't just a beauty contest for plants. Each year plants of the same va-

riety are grown side by side. One is always a well-performing variety already on the market and the others are never-before-sold. The independent AAS judges are professional horticulturists and their trial gardens are located in geographically diverse areas all over the U.S. and Canada. Walt Disney World has the garden closest to Orlando and the next closest are in Miami and at Callaway Gardens in Georgia. Judges score each entry and report their scores at the end of the growing season. They look for significantly improved qualities such as earliness to bloom or harvest, disease or pest tolerance, novel colors or flavors, novel flower forms, total yield, length of flowering or harvest

and overall performance.

There are two types of awards in four categories of trials. There is an AAS Gold Medal Award, only given once or twice a decade, and it is reserved for a breeding breakthrough. The other AAS Award recognizes a flower or vegetable for significant achievements, proven to be superior to other like-varieties on the market. The four categories of trials and awards are Flower, Bedding Plant, Vegetable and Cool Season Bedding Plant. AAS Winners are announced three times each year in November, January and July and the media and cooperative extension agents introduce AAS Winners to home gardeners.

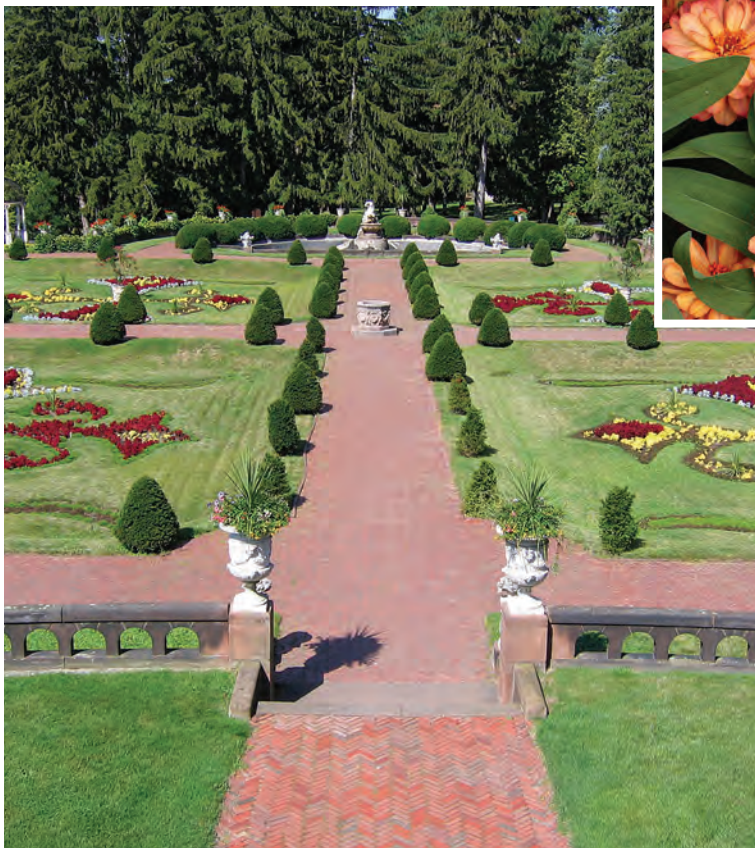
There are many places to see the newest AAS winners. There are almost 200 AAS Display Gardens throughout North America and may be found at public botanic gardens or arboretums, a municipality, a garden retailer, a university garden or other places. The two in Florida are at the Naples Botanic Garden and Costa Farms in Miami.

When you purchase an AAS Winner, you know that it has been put through its paces by an independent, neutral trialing organization and has been judged by experts in their field. The AAS Winner label is like a stamp of approval. Visit <http://all-america-selections.org/> for the winners and locations of all of the trial and display gardens.

Pictured above: Zinnia 'Profusion Double Deep Salmon', an AAS winner in 2013. Photo by All America Selections.

Bottom photo: Some AAS winners make it into our vegetable garden.

Far Left: AAS display garden at Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park in Canandaigua, New York.



Photos by Stephen G. Pategas, Hortus, Oasis.