**AAS Winners for 2017**

From my office window, I have a wonderful view of the Kenosha County Center All-America Selections (AAS) Display Garden which is now bleak of vegetation. Winter may halt the growing of non-hardy flowers and vegetables in our region, but ideas are germinating in the minds of the Master Gardeners as they plan for next year’s garden and its theme, “Foodscaping: Interspersing Edibles in the Ornamental Garden”.

All-America Selections is a non-profit organization that tests new flower and vegetable varieties then promotes the best performers as AAS Winners. These winners are grown in display gardens throughout the nation to provide the opportunity for gardeners to view them growing in site conditions similar to their own.

As the only non-profit trialing organization for plants that demonstrate great garden performance throughout North America, AAS has announced some exciting new AAS Winners for the 2017 garden season. Each of the following varieties was trialed in North America by professional, independent, volunteer judges during one growing season. Each was trialed next to comparison varieties that are considered best-in-class among those currently on the market.

This group of AAS Winners for 2017 includes:

Celosia Asian Garden (National): rose flowering annual great for pollinators

Dianthus Supra Pink F1 (National): flowering annual with mottled pink blooms on compact plants

Fennel Antares F1 (National): herb with edible bulb; first fennel selected as AAS winner

Geranium Calliope® Medium Dark Red (National): geranium with deep red velvet flowers

Okra Candle Fire F1 (National): red okra that is edible as well as ornamental

Pea Patio Pride (Regional): pea suitable for containers

Penstemon Twizzle Purple (Regional – Heartland and Southeast): purple blooming perennial hardy in zones 5-8

Pepper Mad Hatter F1 (National): three-sided sweet pepper

Squash Honeybaby F1 (Regional): productive winter squash on a compact plant

Tomato Chef’s Choice Yellow F1 (Regional – Southeast): indeterminate yellow beefsteak type

Tomato Patio Choice Yellow F1 (National): compact yellow determinate cherry type

Verbena EnduraScape™ Pink Bicolor (National): pink bicolor flowering annual

Vinca Mega Bloom Orchid Halo F1 (National): purple blossoms with white eye; annual

Vinca Mega Bloom Pink Halo F1 (National): pink blossoms with white eye; annual

Watermelon Mini Love F1 (National): personal sized watermelon on shorter vines

Zinnia Profusion Red (National): true red flowers that don’t fade

Brokers, growers, mail order and seed packet companies can purchase these varieties immediately. Retailers and consumers will find most of these AAS Winners for sale for the 2017 gardening season at local garden centers and plant outlets. The exception is some of the regional winners, since these winners are selected for certain locations across our nation. AAS refers to our region, Region 4, as the “Great Lakes” region, and none of the 2017 winners are specific to our region and may not be available locally.

Plan to visit the Kenosha County Center AAS Display Garden this summer to view these AAS winners growing in an edible/ornamental garden setting. The Kenosha County Center is located at the intersection of highways 45 and 50 in Bristol, and the garden is located at the north end of the building adjacent to the parking area.

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