Video of the Week:  Low Light Indoors? No Problem!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Great Plains Growers Conference
January 12, 13 & 14, 2017
St. Joseph, MO
For more information, go to http://www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org/

ORNAMENTALS

Caddo Sugar Maples

Sugar maples often have significant problems with our Kansas weather. Our hot, often dry summers and windy conditions can shorten the life of these trees. However, some sugar maples are better adapted to Kansas conditions than others. Our John C. Pair Horticulture Center has evaluated sugar maples for well over 20 years and has identified selections that are much better adapted to Kansas. Of particular interest are the Caddo sugar maples which originated from an isolated population in Caddo, County, Oklahoma. These are true sugar maples and are considered an ectotype and are more drought tolerant, better adapted to high pH soils and more resistant to leaf scorch and tatter than the norm. Just how resistant to scorch is impressive. The last three weeks of August in 2003 saw temperatures at our research station over 100 degrees each day with no rain for the month prior. All other sugar maples in the trial had severely scorched leaves. Not a single leaf of any of the caddo maples was scorched. Leaf water potential readings taken pre-dawn showed all other trees in the trial past the wilting point while the Caddo maples were barely stressed.

Another interesting characteristic of caddo maples is that they tend to retain their leaves in the winter and therefore have been suggested as screens or for use in windbreaks. Dr. John Pair, the late director of the Horticulture Center, selected and released two Caddo maples over 10 years ago. Both these selections color early and have consistent good red fall color. Drought tolerance and resistance to leaf scorch and leaf tatter are exceptional. However, neither will do well in a heavy clay soil that is frequently saturated. These trees can be damaged or killed if planted in wet sites.
The first selection, ‘Autumn Splendor’, has the traditional sugar maple growth pattern and needs plenty of room to mature. ‘John Pair’ is smaller and more compact and more likely to fit a residential landscape. This tree is also noted for a dense, uniform crown. If you are in the market for a sugar maple, consider these before making a final decision. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

Newer Lights Available for Indoor Gardeners

Many gardeners use fluorescent lights to start young vegetable and flower plants during the spring or to grow certain houseplants all year long. Traditionally, we have used fixtures with T-12 lamps suspended a few inches above the tops of the plants. However, T-12 lamps are fading away due to newer lamps that are a better choice for indoor gardens. These are known as T-8 and T-5 lamps. The number after the “T” refers to the diameter of the lamp in eighths of an inch. Therefore, a T-12 lamp is 12/8 or 1.5 inches in diameter and are what most people are familiar with. A T-8 is 8/8 or 1 inch in diameter, and a T-5 is 5/8 of an inch in diameter.

So, does a smaller diameter mean less light? Not at all. In fact, the T-5 can be the brightest of the three. Another advantage for these newer lamps is they use less electricity per lumen. The traditional 48-inch T-12 is rated at 40 watts. However, there are newer styles of T-12’s that are 34 watts. The T-8 is rated at 32 watts and the T-5 at 28 watts.

This sounds too good to be true. Are there drawbacks? Maybe so or maybe not. First is cost if you have to replace T-12 fixtures to convert to a T-8 system. However, newer fixtures may be able to handle either T-12’s or T-8’s. Therefore, if you purchased fluorescent fixtures in the last few years, check to see if they are rated for T-8’s before replacing them. Note that lamp costs are comparable between T-12’s and T-8’s. The T-5 lamps may be more expensive so check prices before converting.

The question becomes, is it worth it? If you have a T-12 fixture that is rated for T-12’s only and are satisfied with your results, then maybe not. However, if you are investing in new fixtures or have fixtures that can use either T-12’s or T-8’s, then go with the T-8’s. They will use less energy, last longer and provide more light. Prices for T-5’s have been dropping so you may want to consider them as well.

The newest technology is LED lighting. LED’s have several advantages over other types of lighting including durability, long life, a cool running temperature and more latitude in choosing specific wavelengths of light. Traditionally, they have been very expensive but costs are dropping rapidly. We are starting to use LED’s as supplemental lighting in the University greenhouses but would suggest only using them on a trial basis at home until you see how they perform for you. (Ward Upham)

All-America Selection Winners for 2017
All-America Selections tests and introduces new flowers and vegetables each year that have done well in trials across North America. This year there were eight vegetable winners and eight flower winners that were national winners.

Descriptions and images below are taken directly from All-America Selection materials. For more detailed information including how to grow, see [http://all-americaselections.org/product-category/year/2017/](http://all-americaselections.org/product-category/year/2017/)

**Vegetables**

**Fennel Antares F1**
2017 AAS Edible – Vegetable Winner

This winner is a “First in Class,” as AAS has never before trialed and declared a fennel an AAS Winner. What is extremely fun about this winning plant is its many uses: as an edible bulb; for its ornamental fronds; as a seed producer; and as a favorite food of pollinators, namely swallowtail caterpillars. The AAS Judges described Antares as a very uniform, pure white, beautiful plant with a much improved, almost sweet, licorice/anise flavor as compared to other market varieties. It was also 7-10 days slower to bolt than comparison varieties. Many AAS Judges said they plan to plant this easy-to-grow fennel in their own gardens next year!

**Okra Candle Fire F1**
2017 Edible – Vegetable Winner

A unique red okra with pods that are round, not ribbed, and a brighter red color than the reddish burgundy okras currently available. This high-performing AAS Winner received high marks for productivity, taste, texture and tenderness as well as the ornamental value of red pods on red stems. One judge noted that Candle Fire okra was quite maintenance free to grow, except for the frequent harvesting, which is a great thing! Candle Fire thrives in the heat and is disease resistant even in hot humid climates like the south where it’s perfect for traditional fried okra. Suitable for both fruit producing and ornamental usage. Aged fruit can be used in flower arrangements. Dry seed can be used as coffee (without caffeine.)

**Pea Patio Pride**
2017 Edible – Vegetable Winner

This compact beauty produces sweet, uniform pods that are very tender when harvested early. With only 40 days needed to maturity, Patio Pride can be one of your first spring harvests or one of the last fall harvests from your Southeastern garden! This pea is wonderful when planted in containers and is ideal for succession planting
yielding a consistent harvest over many weeks. Plant in patio containers with cool-season flowers for a beautiful combination ornamental and edible display.

**Pepper Mad Hatter F1**  
2017 AAS Edible – Vegetable Winner

This exotic pepper wins on uniqueness alone! However, the plant’s vigor, earliness, high yields, large size and awesome taste all contribute to its high score among AAS judges. Mad Hatter is a member of the Capsicum baccatum pepper species from South America commonly used in Bolivian and Peruvian cuisine. You can impress your friends by growing this pepper and showing off the novel three-sided shape and deliciously sweet taste. The taste has a refreshing, citrus floral flavor that remains sweet, only occasionally expressing mild heat near the seeds. Be prepared for vigorous and robust plants that are easy to grow because they were bred for North America’s many growing conditions. Use your abundant harvest raw in salads, pickled or stuffed with cheese…a new favorite!

**Squash Winter Honeybaby F1**  
2017 Edible – Vegetable Winner

Honeybaby is a very productive variety of winter squash producing numerous fruits on a compact plant. These shorter vines grow 2-3 feet in a semi-bush habit showing great garden vigor. Short, wide fruits are slightly larger, sweet and nutty and meatier than similar comparison varieties. Honeybaby is deliciously steamed, baked or made into soups and stews.

**Tomato Chef’s Choice Yellow F1**  
2017 AAS Edible – Vegetable Winner

The fourth addition to the popular Chef’s Choice tomato series is Chef’s Choice Yellow which produces hearty beefsteak type tomatoes in a beautiful yellow color. Tomato lovers and culinary gardeners will fall for this large meaty delicacy that has a sweet, citrus-like flavor with just the right amount of acid and the perfect tomato texture. AAS Judges raved about the quantity of the 10-ounce fruits that each 5-foot indeterminate vines produced. You’ll enjoy harvesting 30 or more fruits throughout the season from this disease (Fusarium Wilt, Verticillium Wilt, Tomato Mosaic Virus, Crack, and Scab) resistant plant with dark green leaves and well-behaved form. You’ll be the envy of all your tomato-growing friends!

**Tomato Patio Choice Yellow F1**  
2017 AAS Edible – Vegetable Winner

Patio Choice Yellow is a new compact, determinate tomato developed specifically for small spaces and container gardens. This AAS Winner produces very large yields of ½ ounce bright yellow cherry tomatoes on short vines that grow only 18 inches tall. This mild flavored cherry
tomato sets over 100 fruit on compact plants which are perfect for urban or small space food gardeners. Consider using these beautiful tomatoes either fresh or in the oven or sun dried for a deliciously sweet treat. For even easier picking, plant in a hanging basket.

**Watermelon Mini Love F1**
2017 Edible – Vegetable Winner

This personal-sized Asian watermelon is perfect for smaller families and smaller gardens. Shorter vines (3-4 feet) still produce up to six fruits per plant and can be grown in smaller spaces. Several judges commented on the crack and split resistant rinds, important for reducing crop loss. For culinary purposes, this deep red fleshed watermelon has a thin but strong rind that can be carved into attractive shapes for fruit salad presentations. Mini Love has a high sugar content resulting in sweet and crisp, juicy flesh that will be a true summer delight for watermelon lovers.

**Flowers**

**Celosia Asian Garden**
2017 Flower Winner

This spiked beauty claimed victory in North America’s trial sites to become the first ever AAS Winner from Japanese breeding company Murakami Seed. The judges gave this entry high marks in the greenhouse for the good branching, almost bushy growth habit and early to bloom flower spikes.

In the garden, Asian Garden Celosia continued to bloom on sturdy stems, keeping the bright pink color all summer long, holding up even through some of the first frosts of the season. The AAS Judges commented on the fact that this celosia was a pollinator-magnet, making this AAS Winner a sure bet for pollinator-friendly gardens.

**Dianthus Interspecific Supra Pink F1**
2017 AAS Flower Winner

Supra Pink joins its sister, 2006 AAS Winner Supra Purple, to give us two fantastic colors in an easy-to-grow interspecific dianthus for three-season (spring, summer, fall) garden color. This compact, bushy plant blooms prolifically with novel mottled pink flowers sporting frilly petal edges that hold up even in summer heat and drought. No deadheading needed on this winner. One judge attempted to deadhead this entry but it re-bloomed too fast to do so! Supra Pink grows to just under a foot in height but is a vigorous grower and will deliver fancy, clear pink flowers for a long time as observed over and over by the AAS Judges. Supra Pink was tested as an annual and won the award based on first-year performance, but similar to other dianthus, it may overwinter in some regions.
Geranium Calliope® Medium Dark Red
2017 AAS Ornamental Vegetative Winner

With an outstanding deep red velvety flower color and great branching habit, Calliope® was unmatched in the AAS Trials when compared to other market varieties. Calliope® Medium Dark Red geranium is an interspecific hybrid with zonal-type flowers and leaves. This AAS Winner has a mounded, semi-spreading growth habit with strong stems supporting the flower heads that are loaded with deep red blossoms. These plants work great in containers, combination plantings, hanging baskets as well as in an in-ground landscape. Gardeners will enjoy exceptional landscape performance in normal conditions as well as in more challenging high heat and drought conditions.

Penstemon barbatus Twizzle Purple F1
AAS Flower Winner

Vibrant purple blooms present a new and unique color in penstemon! Twizzle Purple was judged as a first-year flowering perennial by judges who were impressed with the upright plant habit and superb flowering performance. This North American native blooms profusely with 1-inch tubular flowers on long slender stalks that grow up to 35 inches high, making this beauty a magnet for pollinators from mid- to late summer. Twizzle Purple can be used to add height to combination planters or in landscapes for high-impact color.

Verbena EnduraScape™ Pink Bicolor
2017 AAS Flower Winner

EnduraScape™ is described as “tough as nails” because it is the first verbena that can tolerate drought and heat plus survive cooler temperatures down to the low teens. This long-blooming pink bicolor verbena is spectacular in the landscape, edging a walk or border as well as in large containers and baskets. Vigorous plants are sturdy spreaders that pop with abundant soft pink blossoms that darken in intensity toward the center of the bloom. Pink Bicolor is the newest color in the series and the AAS Judges deemed it truly spectacular!

Vinca Mega Bloom Orchid Halo F1
2017 AAS Flower Winner

Mega Bloom is an exciting new series of vinca bred to withstand heat and humidity without succumbing to disease. Orchid Halo produces huge bright rich purple blossoms with a wide white eye creating a striking look for the garden, even from a distance. Plants maintain a nice, dense habit with flowers staying on top of the foliage for full flower power color.
Growers will like the early bloom time, compactness in the greenhouse and plant uniformity.

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**Zinnia Profusion Red**
2017 Flower Winner

This newest Profusion Zinnia winner is the fourth color in the single flower series to win the coveted AAS Winner award. The original Profusions were ground-breaking plants because of their compact form, disease resistance, early and continuous blooms all season long and ease in growing. Judges raved about the vibrant, perfectly true red color of this zinnia which doesn’t fade in summer’s intense rays. As one judge stated, “We have waited for years for this true red color in zinnias!” Gardeners will find many uses for the true red zinnia that’s easy to grow and a favorite of pollinators. Uniform plants and outstanding greenhouse and garden performance will be especially important for growers producing Profusion Red for retail sales.

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The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed. To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to cdipman@ksu.edu or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

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