

Spring Color Plants

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It is warm enough to plant early summer color plants.

In the shade consider pentas, begonias, and coleus. Pentas are available in red, pink, lavender, and white. The tiny flowers are produced in rounded clusters about 3 inches across to make an excellent show of color. They are also a favorite nectar source for hummingbirds and butterflies. They are available in full bloom at nurseries and stay in constant bloom from now until November. There are several selections that vary in height from 14 to 24 inches tall. Pentas are uniform, disciplined growers that serve equally well in borders, massed plantings or as specimens in containers.

Semperfloren begonias are available with clear green or red-green leaf colors and red or pink flowers. There are several selections but most are 8 inches tall and 8 inches in diameter. The plants do best in shade but if you get them planted and established early in the season (now!) they can tolerate considerable sun through the summer. Semperfloren begonias are quite drought tolerant. They let you know when they need water by turning pale. Use the semperfloren begonias in containers, as borders, and in massed plantings.

There is a new begonia on the market, the "Whopper". It has been designated a Texas Super Star by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension because of its attractiveness and adaptability to use in Texas landscapes. It has the same characteristics of the Semperfloren begonias in terms of leaf and bloom colors but it is 3 times as large! It is already a dominant part of my landscape after just 2 years of availability.

The appeal of coleus comes from the color of its foliage, lots of variation of maroon, green and golden including patterns on the leaves. Some of the varieties grow to 3 feet tall and nearly as wide. A few of the varieties are disciplined growers and can be used as specimen plants or in a border but most do best as massed plantings or as background color. The larger selections can be laid down or broken by wind and in my experience none would qualify as xeriscape plants.