

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

And the winner is...

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The red color comes from the antioxidant betalain, an excellent source of color pigment for natural dyes and coloring agents.

The beauty, resilience, and popularity of coreopsis was a natural fit for the National Garden Bureau to add this glorious flower to its red carpet lineup. In the language of flowers, coreopsis means “always cheerful,” and these delightful natives of the Americas live up to this designation. Equally, at home in naturalized prairie settings or manicured landscapes, coreopsis provides a lovely sunny presence wherever they make their home. Although typically seen in colors of yellow and gold, many species also contain red, bronze and burgundy colors and have been commonly used as dyes in native fabrics. Before the introduction of coffee to America, Native Americans boiled the flowers into a warming tea.

The newest star in the garden lineup is calibrachoa, with its 28 different varieties. A relative of the petunia, (although now recognized as it's own genus) calibrachoa hit the marketplace arriving from Brazil via Japan via Europe in the 1980s but were considered difficult to cultivate. They are beautiful plants that do well in containers and hanging baskets and this specialized treatment has turned out to be their niche market. They aren't really mini petunias, yet they are drought tolerant. Plant in well-drained acidic soil and provide six hours of direct sunlight per day. You will be rewarded with brilliant colors, fascinating streaks and stripes, eye-catching stars, and patterns that resemble the strokes of a brush. Your patio will be a floral artwork with calibrachoa in the honored lineup.

With all of these award winners, my supreme favorite still lies with the exquisite lotus flowers that I enjoyed in Southeast Asia. The deep, rich colors, their versatile expressions, I am deeply, madly in love with lotus. Alas, I can't grow it here in my backyard pond.

Speaking of winners, gigantic congratulations to Sal and Susan Captain of Captain Vineyards for being honored as the Moraga Business Persons of the Year! I am personally thrilled to see two stewards of the earth, farmers, gardeners, wine makers, and all around great individuals inducted into this hall of fame. Bravo!

Savor a respite in your landscape for the next few weeks before I offer you a plethora of chores that need attention. Enjoy your own company.

Keep doing what you love and you'll be a winner too. Roll out the red carpet for your favorite plants and get ready for a rowdy and rousing spring.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



The National Garden Bureau's Award Winner calibrachoa callie burgundy in a hanging basket.



Oranges in the forefront and flowering quince in the back of the garden.