

## 2017 Flower All America Selections

### *Penstemon barbatus* 'Twizzle Purple'



Photos courtesy All-America Selections

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.

### Zinnia 'Profusion Red'

This newest zinnia winner is the fourth color in the single flower series to win the coveted AAS Winner award. The original Profusions were groundbreaking 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. Gardeners will find many uses for the true red zinnia that's easy to grow and a favorite of pollinators.

### Verbena Pink EnduraScape 'Pink Bicolor'



'Pink Bicolor' is described as very tough, because it is the first verbena that can tolerate drought and heat, plus survive cooler temperatures down to the

low teens. This long-blooming 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.

### Vinca Mega Bloom 'Orchid Halo' and 'Pink Halo'



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. 'Pink Halo' produces huge soft pink blossoms with a wide white eye. Both vinca plants maintain a nice, dense habit with flowers staying on top of the foliage for full flower power color.

Source: All America Selections

## GARDEN GUIDE

### THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

Mary Jane Frogge, Extension Associate

Late February is a good time to air-layer such house plants as dracaena, dieffenbachia and rubber plant, especially if they have grown too tall and leggy.

Prune fruit trees and grapes in late February or early March after the worst of the winter cold is passed but before spring growth begins.

Order gladiolus corms now for planting later in the spring after all danger of frost has passed. Locate in full sun in well-drained soil.

Branches of forsythia, pussy willow, quince, spirea and dogwood can be forced for indoor bloom. Make long, slanted cuts when collecting the branches and place the stems in a vase of water. Change the water every four days. They should bloom in about three weeks.

Send off seed orders early this month to take advantage of seasonal discounts. Some companies offer bonus seeds of new varieties to early buyers.

Do not start your vegetable transplants indoors too early. Six weeks ahead of the expected planting date is early enough for the fast-growth species such as tomatoes. Eight weeks allows enough time for the slower-growing types such as peppers.

Check stored bulbs, tubers and corms. Discard any that are soft or diseased.

This year plan to grow at least one new vegetable that you have never grown before; it may be better than what you are already growing. The new dwarf varieties on the market which use less space while producing more food per square foot may be just what you are looking for.

Check any vegetables you have in storage. Dispose of any that show signs of shriveling or rotting.

Order perennial plants and bulbs now for cut flowers this summer. Particularly good choices are phlox, daisies, coreopsis, asters and lilies.

## Screen Time: Create Your Family Plan

Jaci Foged

Extension Educator

"Mom, in the old days did you have TV?" The "old days" often come up in conversations with my 7 and 11-year-old daughters. Of course I had television growing up, but it was more difficult to access in my childhood! When I was growing up we had two televisions. One in our living room, a 19-inch dial activated television and another 27-inch (that was big back then) in our family room which could be operated using a remote.

We lived in the country near a small town in western Nebraska where you could get 2.5 channels (one was always fuzzy so that one only counts for half). We didn't have access to the internet or a computer with a modem until I was 10 years old and the internet was quite a bit slower and less reliable back then.

Screen time wasn't something that needed to be discussed. We looked up information in Encyclopedias. We called people on a telephone, which was attached to the wall by a cord. We wrote letters using paper and pen. We played games with the whole family on boards and with cards. We watched TV on Friday nights (TGIF) and woke up early Saturday morning for 6:30 a.m. cartoons which ended by noon. Children played outdoors in all types of weather and didn't come home until dark.

It's 2017 and my daughter doesn't even have a "real" science

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Nebraska Extension's NebGuide "Brain Development and Learning in the Primary Years" (G2198) at <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g2198.pdf>
- Nebraska Extension's NebGuide "The Importance of Outdoor Experiences in the Primary Years" (G2202) at <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g2202.pdf>
- Nebraska Extension's NebGuide "Enjoyable Time Together: A Journey of Happy Memories" (G1882) at <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/g1882.pdf>
- Nebraska Extension's The Learning Child Blog "Family Game Nights, a Win-Win for Everyone" <https://learningchildblog.com/2016/10/01/family-game-night-a-win-win>

book that she can bring home to study with. Instead, we have a sheet of paper with a log-in for a website. This means she spends time looking at a computer screen when she could be reading a book. She spends time asking Siri what an igneous rock is rather than looking it up in a dictionary.

What does all of this mean for us in 2017? This past October, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released new recommendations and resources for families regarding screen time. Screen time includes activities done in front of a screen, such as using an app on your phone or watching music videos on a tablet.

Infant and toddler's brains are growing at an exceptional rate during the first two years of life. It is important for these children to have positive social interactions with the people caring for them. Therefore, the AAP recommends children younger than 18 months participate with screens only for video chatting.

For children 18-24 months,

only high quality programming (such as PBS or Sesame Street) is suggested. It is vitally important for an adult to be with the infant during the video chat and while watching the program to help them better understand what they are seeing and hearing. Research shows unstructured playtime is more valuable for a young child's developing brain than electronic media. Young children are more likely to remember doing an activity than watching an activity being done.

Children ages 2-5 years should be limited to one hour of screen time per day. Again, the programs watched should be of high-quality and be viewed with parents.

For children 6 years and older, screen time should not interfere with time spent doing other activities. Sleep, physical activities and mealtimes should be of top priority. Studies show a relationship between television viewing and young children being overweight. "Caring For Our Children" states children 3-5 years who watch two or more hours of television per day

have an increased risk of being overweight.

What does this mean for adults? It means we need to be good role models for our children. Put the phone down and play with your child when they are at the park. Make it a rule to turn off the TV during meal times. Silence phones and charge them outside of your child's bedroom at night.

To help families navigate the evolving digital world, the AAP has developed a guide for creating a family plan for

screen time and media use.

The plan is broken up into nine areas: screen free zones, screen free times, device curfews, choose & diversify your media, balancing on-line and off-line time, manners matter, digital citizenship, safety first and sleep & exercise. There are examples and suggestions pre-populated and areas to write in personal guidelines. Create your own family plan by going to <http://HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan>.

### Upcoming Learning Child Trainings

Nebraska Extension teaches several early childhood development classes for childcare providers. Listed are upcoming classes held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road (unless location otherwise noted). For additional information, to sign up, contact Jaci Foged at [jfoged2@unl.edu](mailto:jfoged2@unl.edu) or 402-441-7180. Some registration forms are at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/family>

**Language and Literacy Early Learning Guidelines (ELG)** – Thursday, Feb. 2 and Thursday, Feb. 9, 6-9 p.m. (must attend both days) at Roper and Sons Funeral Home in Waverly. Cost \$20. Receive 6 in-service hours. Register by Jan. 26.

**Pediatric & Adult CPR and First Aid Training Through the American Red Cross** – Saturday, Feb. 4, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Cost \$40. Register by Jan. 27. This course meets the Nebraska licensing requirements for childcare providers.

**Environmental Awareness for Child Care Providers and After-School Teachers** – Tuesday, Feb 21, 10 a.m.-12 noon. Cost \$5. Register by Feb. 6. Teaching children ages 3-9 about our environment can be fun and easy. In this workshop, you will practice hands-on activities to help children learn to protect our environment. Receive 2 in-service hours.

**Go Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (Go NAP SACC)** – Designed for providers who care for children birth to 5 years old. Tuesday, Feb 21 and Thursday, Feb 23, 5:30-8:30 p.m. (must attend both days). No cost, dinner provided. Register by Feb. 14. Go NAP SACC focuses on: breastfeeding & infant feeding, child nutrition, infant & child physical activity, outdoor play & learning, and screen time.