

Container gardening is considered a great pleasure that can be easily accomplished without all the hard, strenuous work of gardening. Most people enjoy having accent beds in which flowering plants are changed seasonally. At Gibbs Landscape Company we are consistently discovering innovative, functional, and appealing ideas for our seasonal color displays with our beds as well as our containers. When choosing plants, think of different textures and heights you may want in your containers. For example, a combination of bold, spiky, delicate and graceful textures in a container creates an interesting contrast. Using tall, vertical, specimen plants and flowers creates a focal point in the container. When you pair plant materials of various heights along with hanging plant material, it creates depth and gives you an assortment that draws your attention all season.

What are the hot new plants going to be this year in the seasonal color world? This is a question designers often ponder because we are always thriving to be unique and set the trend. With that being said, we try to combine plants that have proven to perform for us each season. We sample with new plant material that are not available in large quantities to see how they perform. Sometimes we find a few diamonds in the rough and this past year was no exception! Pairing the new plants with the trustworthy ensures beautiful containers for the duration of the season.

Some of my personal favorites are Red Head Coleus, Trusty Rusty Coleus, Whooper Begonias and Blizzard Ivy Geraniums. The brilliant red color of the Red Head Coleus leaf is a great combination with rose, blue and yellow blooming flowers. The Trusty Rusty Coleus has an orange center with a chartreuse outside edge that gives the leaf great intensity.

The Whopper Begonias were also huge hit last year. With the abundant amount of rain we received last summer, the Whopper Begonias lived up to their namesake. One of the great qualities that Whoppers have to offer is, unlike the Dragon Wing Begonias, they have a leaf that is a bronze and green as opposed to the Dragon Wing Begonia that only has green leaf. The bronze leaf allows the begonia to tolerate more sun than the green leaf. The Whopper Begonia also offers a rose color bloom rather than the softer pink. To an untrained eye, the Rose Bronze Leaf Whopper Begonia can be mistaken for the Red Bronze Leaf Begonia since they are similar in appearance but when you view them next to each other, you can see the difference.

My other favorite, the Blue Blizzard Ivy Geranium, works beautifully when it's dripping over the edge of containers. I think one of the most unique flowering colors and appealing shade in a landscape is always blue.

Looking at the fashion world, we will see pastels making a comeback. Those shades paired with bright, exploding colors are to be the trend for spring 2014. Will this translate into the landscape world? Yes, I believe that the fashion trend will be visible in our landscapes this spring as well. Last spring, bright, bold colors such as red and orange were on-point in fashion and that definitely carried over to the landscape industry, therefore I think the use of softer shades of flowers mixed with vivid, dramatic colors will be used extensively this year.

Bold colors like red can be used as a mood elevator; it can enhance self-confidence and make you feel in control. The use of orange can increase your energy level and increase your creativity. So what do the

softer colors have to offer? Pinks, lavenders, blue, pale yellows create a soothing mood and comforting feeling that is missing with the vivacious colors. By combining the two color palates, you get the energy stimulation without overdoing it. Reds and oranges can often use another color to calm them down while the pinks and lavenders could use another color to help them pop- which is why they work well together in seasonal containers.

Layering the different colors and repeating color patterns from your existing landscape are the best ways to marry the color theme of your container with your existing landscape without it seeming chaotic. I would suggest using the Rustic Orange Coleus as the height in the back of the container and stepping down to rose bronze leaf begonia, then adding a pop of the chartreuse Sweet Potato Vine and Blue Scaevola to dangle along the front of the container creates the ultimate balanced, container experience. Adding accent textures such as Cannas or Princess Caroline Grass helps to tie everything together while providing interest. Adding an intermediate level of blues like Cathedral Salvia or purple from the Carita Angelonia might help pick up color from the surrounding landscape and from other materials in the container. This will enhance the comforting experience you are trying to achieve.

Seasonal color is one of the easiest ways to refresh your landscape. Changing out your seasonal color containers twice a year rejuvenates your property and keeps one feeling satisfied without making major changes to the landscape. Regardless of the size of the property, a splash of seasonal color will leave you content and cheerful each time you see it.