

PRO  Green EXPO
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Native and Non-native Plant Materials as Novel
Annuals

Mike Schnelle
mike.schnelle@okstate.edu
www.hortla.okstate.edu
p 405-744-7361

Annuals

- Although new and exciting cultivars of typical bedding plants are important and welcomed by the public, today's presentation will focus on existing plant materials, both woody and herbaceous, that often are underutilized as "annuals" in Colorado or elsewhere.
- A few "far-fetched" examples, at beginning of presentation, have been provided to remind all of us to stay open-minded to the endless "annual" possibilities.

Landscaping with Tropicals

- May be, genetically speaking, woody or herbaceous plants
- Will not typically overwinter in Colorado



Landscaping with Edibles



Landscaping with Edibles



Beta vulgaris 'Pink Lipstick'
Pink Lipstick Swiss chard



Borago officinalis (Borage)



Cucumis sativus 'Sikkim'

- Diversifying with international genetics makes sense on so many levels!
- Have trellised this stunning cucumber as a background ornamental many times – we must continue to think outside the box

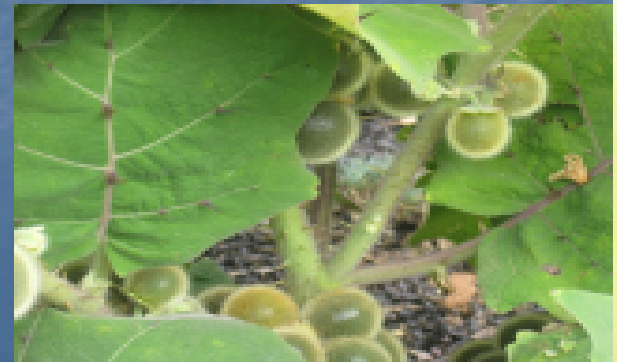


Basella alba 'Rubra'
Malabar spinach

- Not only a prize-winning non-native that needs to be promoted more in the ornamentals world, but also doubles as an edible ornamental

Solanum quitoense (Bed of Nails)

- African genetics from Nightshade family
- 3' tall
- Showy, spinescent foliage and stems
- Great for background or container settings
- Simply a showstopper!



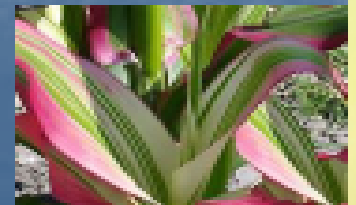


Solanum quitoense

- Should be on everyone's bucket list to grow at least one time!

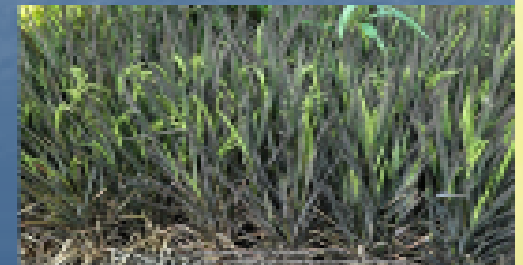
Zea mays 'Variegata' (Japanese corn)

- Don't laugh until you have personally tried this strain that comes true from seed
- I use it as a background annual or in the middle of pots in lieu of Dracaena spikes – colors will clash with surrounding plants without a little forethought
- Even the ears are a pretty dark red
- Subject to the same pests as field corn
- 4-6' or shorter when stressed/rootbound
- Pink, yellow and white stripes
- Magnificent when space permits



Oryza sativa Black Madras

- Personally need more experience with ornamental rice
- But what times I have grown this, and observations on ordinary field rice, makes me determined to experiment further
- 14-28" – will set seed to further bolster ornamental appeal





Landscaping for Wildlife

*Landscaping to Attract Butterflies,
Moths and Skippers, Oklahoma State
University Publication HLA-6430*



Heteropterys glabra (Redwing)



Heteropterys glabra

- Subtropical woody shrub that we can grow as an annual
- Yellow flowers and red schizocarps (samaras) all summer long
- May only get 2' growth or more in one season
- Good in containers or in waves of one in flower beds (could be a focal point)

Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*)



Phyla nodiflora

- Native that can actually overwinter but treated as an annual for today's purposes
- Small but many white flowers with purple and pink splotches - blooms intermittently throughout the summer
- Potential for foreground plantings, hanging baskets, containers, etc.
- Species withstands foot traffic w/in reason
- One season's growth under 8" in flower
- Full sun or dappled shade

Crossandra infundibuliformis 'Orange Marmalade'



Crossandra

- Hasn't been that long ago that this species was mainly just a specialty houseplant
- Over time, with improved propagation and breeding efforts, this plant has proven itself to be a great specialty annual
- Grow in mixed containers or in foreground plantings with expected growth to 12-15"
- Orange to yellow to red selections
- Foliage is fiercely showy even though plant flowers incessantly til first frost
- Most content when growing in shade

Crossandra 'Nile Queen'

- True red flowers coupled with glossy foliage
- Handles full sun although shade is best



Duranta (*Duranta erecta*)



Caricature plant (New Guinea)
(*Graptophyllum pictum*)
'Tricolor' and 'Chocolate', L to R
respectively





Graptophyllum pictum
Caricature plant

Swainsona formosa (Sturt's desert pea)



Swainsona formosa

- Has been available by seed for many years but has failed to catch on
- Sprawling plant that can grow 8-10" tall x 12" wide in one season
- Very unusual flowers coupled with grayish green foliage – had a workshop attendee inform me that this was the ugliest flower she had ever seen – I respectfully disagree
- Should be part of a xeriscape program

Arachis glabrata (ornamental peanut)

- Small but many yellow flowers all summer
- Sun to light/partial shade
- This is not the peanut species we eat
- Does not produce edible “nuts”
- Usually found in warm climates but appropriate as a Colorado annual
- Plugs sometimes commercially available



Cleome gynandra – African genetics that I'm not sure we have thoroughly evaluated?



Poinsettia cyathophora (Fire on the Mountain)



Poinsettia cyathophora

- Old-fashioned annual that deserves greater respect
- Has xeric qualities and then quickly rebounds/re-hydrates when finally watered again (within reason of course)
- 8-12" annual
- Use in front of beds and in mixed containers
- Full sun but tolerates light shade

Orthosiphon aristatus (Cat's whiskers)



Orthosiphon aristatus

- Tolerates some shade and thus will then demand less water – but full exposure okay
- Vegetatively propagated
- 36" in one season
- Keeps flowering until a hard frost
- Underappreciated by many plantspeople

Alternanthera brasiliana Purple Prince
(Purple Prince joyweed)



Euphorbia cotinifolia
(Mexican spurge)



Ipomoea carnea (Bush ipomea)



Ipomea carnea ssp. *fistulosa*
(White morning glory tree)



Ipomoea carnea

- Easily 4-6' in one season
- Succulent-like glossy foliage makes this a xeriscape candidate
- White, pink or lavender flowers
- Shrub-like tropical "morning glory"
- Likely has overwintered on occasion in Colorado (mild winter and deep mulch) but will behave as an annual otherwise
- Plant in back of mixed beds
- Needs further experimentation with PGRs to lower height

Senna didymobotrya (Popcorn Cassia)

- Strikingly beautiful legume!
- Opportunistic species in Africa and elsewhere
- 4' plus height in one season
- Black/brown/dark purple flower tips showy
- Background species or large containers



Senna didymobotrya



Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*)



Buffalo gourd (*Cucurbita foetidissima*)



Cucurbita foetidissima

- I grew up with this native “weed” but have noticed it can fetch a healthy retail price by mail order folks and possibly others
- Like most gourds, it has a showy flower, “fun” baseball-sized striped fruit on roughly-textured gray-green vine that often sprawls 3-5’ in one season
- I only throw this species in to remind all of us to not pre-judge what others will seek out when given the opportunity!

About Exotics: We Should First
Determine Plants of Value Right
Here in the U.S.



However, What Possibilities Exist Beyond Our Borders?

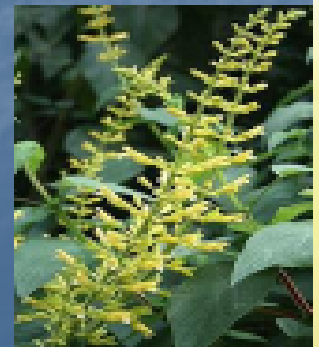


Global Horticulture Conference November 2020



Salvia madrensis Red Neck Girl

- Yellow flowers, not the norm for this genus – blooms later in season
- 2-3' tender perennial treated as an annual
- Very showy coarse winged stems
- I don't have 30 years experience with this plant but like what I've seen to date
- Deserves a "high profile" area in landscapes, containers, etc.



Salvia madrensis 'Red Neck Girl'



Asclepias curassavica

- Look for 'Silky Deep Red' selection



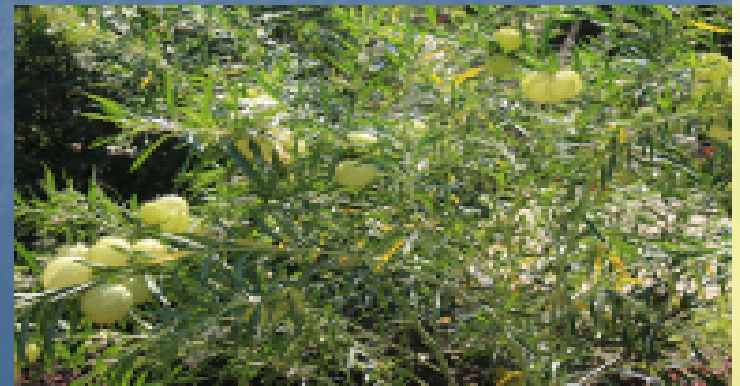
Asclepias curassavica (Tropical milkweed)

- Orange or yellow selections ('Silky Gold') – stellar
- Easily 2-3' growth in one season
- Butterfly magnet
- Occasional pests a possibility in cultivation
- Exotic milkweeds well received by our native monarchs



Gomphocarpus physocarpus (Balloon plant)

- This plant may change your life – it's that exciting!
- Basically a tropical milkweed relative
- White flowers nice but the real joy is in the papery seed pods
- Use as a background annual or possibly in large containers



Gomphocarpus physocarpus Balloon plant

- Commercially available from specialty growers
- Promote for wildscapes
- 4-5' tall and may lodge



Gomphocarpus physocarpus

- Specialty cut

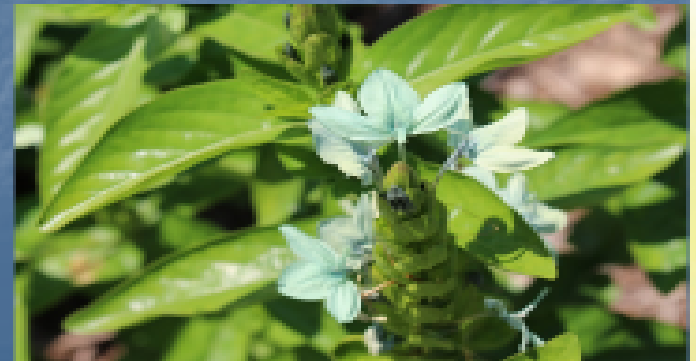


Gomphocarpus physocarpus

- Seed pods will make you tear up; they are so pretty!

Ecbolium amplexicaule (Green swan flower)

- Unique flower from South Africa – seems like everything is “golden” from that part of the globe
- 12” annual for containers and foreground – I would like to try in baskets
- Pretty foliage even when not in flower



Ecbolium amplexicaule



Isotoma (Laurentia) axillaris Blue Star or Laurentia

- This blue-flowered annual looks dainty but in fact is very resilient
- Sexually or asexually propagated
- Full sun to light shade
- 6-8"
- Flowers all summer
- Various cultivars



Isotoma axillaris
(Blue Star or Laurentia)



Isotoma in mixed planter





GoldDust®
Mecardonia hybrid

- Proven Winners Program

Pennisetum purpureum 'Tift 8' (Vertigo fountain grass)

- Easy to grow grass with purple-green blades
- 24"
- Full sun
- Desires water to look it's best





Manettia inflata (Candy corn plant)

- Blooms readily
- Annual vine in this part of the world
- Asexually propagated
- Full sun
- Semi-xeric with mulch
- 3' or more growth in one season

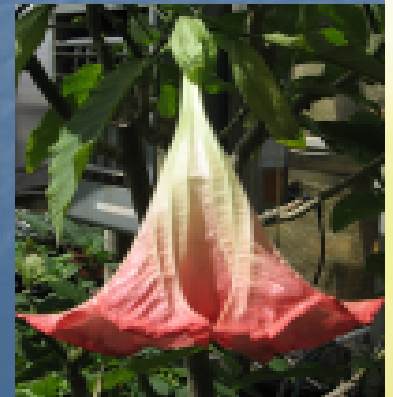
Manettia inflata

- Can find slightly different Latin name(s) in the literature



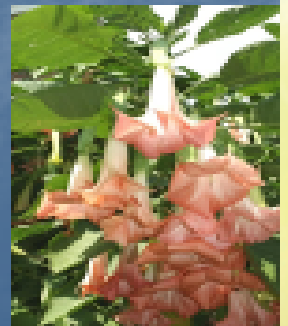
Brugmansia hybrid Angel trumpet

- This plant really doesn't want to be in Colorado or Oklahoma
- However, the flowers are addictive and thus a temptation to grow
- Wants to be in warmer climates with longer growing season
- Still, a great specialty annual
- Great deal of drama in gardening magazines about toxicity



Brugmansia 'Cherub'

- Tropical genus that grows fast enough to enjoy flowers in even colder climates
- Blooms incessantly
- Admittedly not new, but a reminder to ignore critics that say it cannot or should not be grown here!
- Can easily grow 4' in one season
- Many commercially available cultivars



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Brugmansia 'Cherub'



Argyrea nervosa
Woolly morning glory



Argyreia nervosa

- Quick, almost rampantly growing vine to cover eyesores, trellises, etc.
- Large tropical leaves with silver underside
- Showy purplish-white flowers



Plectranthus forsteri 'Marginatus' (Plectranthus)

- Foreground, ground cover or baskets



Plectranthus x 'Mona Lavender'





Euphorbia marginata
(Snow on the Mountain)

- Native waiting to be appreciated
- One of many right under our noses!

Questions???





Thank you!

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