

Fall-blooming Perennials | Container Gardening | Winter Design Inspiration

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Steve Castorani, who began his career at an early age while helping with the family vegetable garden, has spent more than 30 years creating successful landscape design-build and nursery businesses. In 1988, he co-founded North Creek Nurseries in Landenberg, Pa., and currently serves as president and CEO. This progressive nursery specializes in perennial plant plug production with an emphasis on Eastern regional native plants. In 2004 Steve co-created the American Beauties Native Plants brand; a portion of each sale benefits the National Wildlife Federation's wildlife habitat program. Here are three of his favorite plant recommendations:

1. Bluestar (*Ansania* 'Blue Ice')

This drought-resistant bluestar is one of Steve's go-to favorites for the front of the border or as a full sun groundcover. 'Blue Ice' blooms stronger and longer than other selections from early to mid-spring for up to 5 weeks. Its 12- to 15-inch blue-green foliage is covered with dark lavender-blue flowers. The foliage turns a lovely yellow in the fall, adding interest in multiple seasons. USDA Zones 5-9.

2. Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens* 'Major Wheeler')

Steve says 'Major Wheeler' is the best selection of coral honeysuckle he has ever grown. This selection is covered in red trumpet flowers in late spring and keeps churning them out all summer and into the fall. The hummingbirds flock to it from miles around. Zones 4-8.

3. 'Jeana' garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata* 'Jeana')

This selection of phlox is Steve's favorite. Covered with varying shades of sweetly scented lavender-pink flowers from midsummer through early autumn, it resembles a summer-blooming lilac in flower, form and texture. Expect a flurry of pollinator activity as it has more butterflies visiting than any other phlox blooming at the same time. Possessing outstanding mildew resistance, it is hardy and grows to 4 to 5 feet tall. Zones 5-9. ☼

MARIA ZAMPINI brings new plants to market through her company, UpShoot LLC. For more information, visit upshoothort.com.

