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JULY/AUGUST 2013

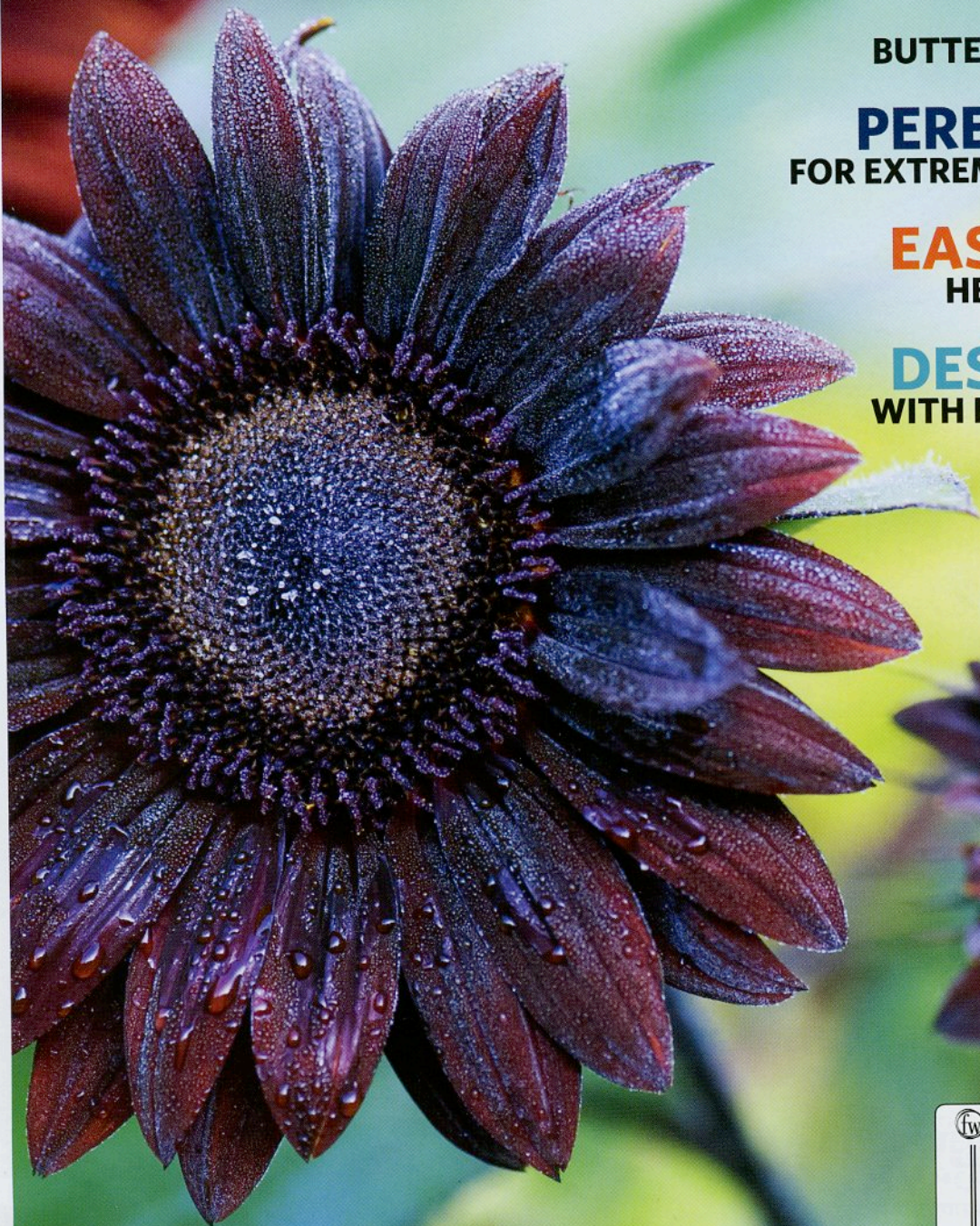
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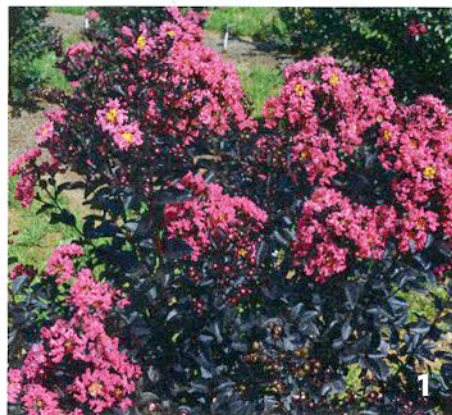
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# Michael Dirr

Recommendations from the esteemed teacher and author

**DR. MICHAEL DIRR** is a retired professor of horticulture from the University of Georgia. His *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants* is the most widely used plant reference and textbook in the United States. Today Dr. Dirr works alongside his partners at Plant Introductions, Inc. to breed, select, evaluate and develop new ornamental plants. He and his wife, Bonnie, are shovel-ready gardeners always sleuthing for the next great plant. The following selections represent three of his personal favorites.

**1** Midnight Magic crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia* 'PIILAG-V')  
Midnight Magic crape myrtle boasts deep purplish-maroon, disease-free foliage and rich neon-pink flowers. Vibrant foliage color persists into fall on this four-to six-foot shrub. Flowering starts in late June in Dr. Dirr's hometown of Athens, Ga., and continues into September. Midnight Magic is nearly sterile, a trait that promotes continuous flowering. The flowers are formed on new growth, so cold temperatures do not eliminate its flowering potential. Full sun; USDA Zones 6–9.



**2** 'Purple Sunset' pomegranate (*Punica granatum* 'Purple Sunset')  
Dr. Dirr says the true beauty of 'Purple Sunset' pomegranate is in the sum of its parts. Its rounded one-inch fruits ripen eggplant purple-black and persist into autumn. (These are extremely sour and inedible.) Bright orange flowers appear on new growth in May (in Athens) and last into September. The long, linear, polished green leaves turn birch yellow in October to November. He suggests a light tip-pruning to encourage new growth and subsequent flowers and fruits. Full sun; Zones 7–9.



**3** 'Crimson Fire' fringe flower (*Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum* 'Crimson Fire')  
Dr. Dirr says that in the Southeast, evergreen red- or purple-leaf loropetalums have supplanted red-leaf barberries in popularity. 'Crimson Fire', a compact selection with layered branches, reaches around three feet tall and six feet wide in five years. It is more uniform in habit than Purple Pixie, with increased cold tolerance. Hot pink flowers complement its ruby-red and purple foliage March through April. It has no notable pests and it is deer resistant! Full sun to part shade, Zones 7 – 9, 10 on the West Coast. ☞



MARIA ZAMPINI introduces new plants to the market through UpShoot, Inc.