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The Mississippi Nursery & Landscape Association Announces the 2011 Mississippi Medallion Award Winners

BRANDON, MS - The Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association is pleased to announce the 2011 Mississippi Medallion Winners and Mississippi Medallion Native Plant of the Year: SunPatiens, 'Aristotle' bell pepper, and *Itea virginica*.

SunPatiens

SunPatiens are sun and heat loving impatiens that will reward with a bounty of flowers from planting in the spring until frost in the fall. These plants have been solid performers in the MSU trial gardens for the past couple of years. Colors include white, red, orange, coral, pink, blush and magenta. There are also spreading as well as variegated selections. For the commercial grower SunPatiens can be direct stuck in the final containers which can result in a labor savings.

SunPatiens picture and description provided by Dr. Gary Bachman, Mississippi State University Extension.



'Aristotle' Bell Pepper

In response to the increased interest in home vegetable gardening 'Aristotle' bell pepper is a 2011 Mississippi Medallion selection. Aristotle is an extremely productive bell pepper that matures in about 75 days from transplant. The 4-lobed fruit are blocky being approximately 4 inches by 4 inches and have thick walls. Mature fruit are a bright, glossy dark green to an intense brilliant red when fully ripe. This pepper resists fruit purpling during time of summer stress. 'Aristotle' is a selection that will perform well both in both the home garden as well as in commercial market production. 'Aristotle' bell pepper shows resistance to bacterial leaf spot (races 1-3), potato virus Y, and tobacco mosaic virus.

'Aristotle' bell pepper photograph © by Seminis Vegetable Seeds, Inc. and is used by permission. This photograph may not be used or reproduced without the written permission by its respective owner; description provided by Dr. Gary Bachman, Mississippi State University Extension.



Itea virginica

The latest native plant selected as a Mississippi Medallion winner is *Itea virginica*, commonly known as Virginia Sweetspire. This Mississippi native shrub has erect, densely branched stem when grown in full sun. The plant is evergreen most years in the coastal region and semi evergreen to deciduous in northern Mississippi. The foliage is dark green and changes to a brilliant red fall color.

Flowers are produced on the previous year's stems, prune after flowering. There is no serious pest or disease. Virginia

Sweetspire is a good choice for naturalizing and transplants well from container grown stock. Propagation is effective by softwood cuttings in the early summer. Seed propagation doesn't require any seed pre-treatment. *Itea virginica* picture provided by Dr. Mengmeng Gu, Mississippi State University Extension; description provided by Dr. Gary Bachman, Mississippi State University Extension.



About the Program:

As a tool for promoting Mississippi grown plants, the Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) established the Mississippi Medallion Program. The purpose of this program is to identify plants that perform exceptionally well throughout the state and to promote the proper use of these plants in landscapes within Mississippi. Between three and five plants are selected as a Medallion Plant annually. Selections are evaluated at a research site by a committee before chosen, and then introduced to wholesale growers and Nursery Certified Professionals throughout the state through MNLA's educational programming efforts. This promotional program benefits everyone involved by offering "proven winners" for public use and enjoyment. The program started in 1996 and has gained support, strength, and momentum each year of its existence. The Mississippi Medallion program became much stronger and identifiable thanks to the three USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants. MNLA debuted the Mississippi Medallion Native Plant of the Year in 2010.

About the Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association:

MNLA is a nonprofit organization whose objective is to advance in the broadest sense the interest of the nurserymen and landscapers of Mississippi, to aid and contribute to the education of its members and the general public, to provide better methods of growing and distributing horticultural products, to provide a central headquarters to promote better personal relationships of its members, and to inform the members of legislative activity, state and national, which would affect the industry.



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