

**2012 Plants of the Year**  
**Compiled by Tina Tuttle, Deep South Region Horticulture Chairman**

Rose: 2012 Roses of the Year

All-American Rose Selection (AARS): Each AARS test garden has a judging panel that participates in a bi-annual scoring process. In this “blind process,” judges do not know the breeder or introducer for the plants they’re grading, and they’re asked to submit scores by serial number.

Tests conducted in 23 gardens nationwide to represent all climate zones. Each garden is also given the care of an average home garden so these roses aren’t spoiled. If they can thrive during our testing, they will most certainly thrive in your garden. In test gardens, the roses are carefully evaluated on a number of criteria. In fact, the judges put many hours of observation into monitoring the performance of the top roses throughout the growing season. AARS winning roses embody all of the characteristics today’s homeowners desire in a garden plant. Each AARS winning rose excelled in an extensive two-year trial program where it’s judged on everything from rose disease resistance to flower production, color and fragrance.

They grade each of the roses on the following characteristics:

- Novelty
- Form - of both buds and open blooms
- Color throughout the blooming cycle
- Aging quality
- Flowering effect
- Rose Fragrance
- Stem/cluster form
- Plant habit
- Vigor
- Foliage
- Rose Disease resistance
- Repeat bloom quality



Each winning rose bears the AARS red rose logo as a “seal of approval” that ensures gardeners that the plants will grow beyond expectations with little maintenance.

Rosa ‘Sunshine Daydream’: Topping the charts with fantastic bloom production and great vigor, this rose is sure to brighten any garden. A Grandiflora, ‘Sunshine Daydream’ embodies both great flower color and foliage - with light yellow flowers finishing cream yellow. Its cuplike petals offer the perfect backdrop to its dark green, glossy foliage. Featuring excellent disease resistance, ‘Sunshine Daydream’ will appeal to all gardeners and rose enthusiasts. Round, bushy and blooming continuously from spring to early frost.

Jackson-Perkins Roses of the Year: 'Summer Nights' Hybrid Tea and 'Sunny Days' Floribunda.

And from the Hampton Court Flower Show, Rosa ‘A Moment in Time’: This super little floribunda is Rose of the Year 2012 and ideal for growing in a pot or at the front of a flower bed. It has healthy, glossy leaves that are almost hidden by the clusters of simple, semi-double red flowers. The scent is quite mild, but the flowers last all summer and into autumn. It is compact enough to grow in a pot on the

patio, or create a focal point in a mixed border. Height 2 feet. The name also lends itself to marking a special occasion such as a wedding, anniversary or a birthday.

**Herb of the Year:** ([www.herb.org](http://www.herb.org)) To achieve Herb of the Year status, an herb must fit within at least two of the three following categories: (1) Medicinal, (2) Culinary, (3) Craft or Decorative. Every year since 1995, the International Herb Association has chosen an Herb of the Year to highlight. **Rosa** is the official Herb of the Year for 2012. It is interesting to note how roses are used in cuisines around the globe, from petals and hips to rose water and syrups. Mouthwatering and fragrant recipes vary widely from main courses and vegetables to beverages and desserts. There are also recipes and formulas for making rose water, syrup, vinegar, glycerite, cordials, soap, and more. Besides the wonderful perfume of this flower used in the bath, boudoir and aromatherapy, rose plays an important role in the apothecary and medicine. Rose essential oil is a valuable, important and age-old industry as highlighted in Dorene Petersen's "Essential Oil of Rose". Crafts include rose beads, waxing roses, and the preparation of both moist and dry potpourris.

**The National Garden Bureau All-American Selections (AAS)** ([www.ngb.org](http://www.ngb.org))

AAS winners are selected from many new cultivars, based on performance in the garden, as well as in the greenhouse. Although no plant offers a guarantee of success in an individual garden, the AAS winners have proven themselves worthy over a broad range of growing conditions. Try these new selections alongside your old standbys so you'll have a means of comparison. AAS winners should be available through local garden centers and mail-order catalogs this spring. Every year, the National Garden Bureau announces All-America Selections, or AAS, winners, cultivars that a network of independent judges across the country find superior. All of the cultivars are new and have never been sold. AAS was started in 1932 to give gardeners a heads-up of what to look for in spring. Each year representatives of the professional horticulture industry select one flower, one vegetable and one perennial to be showcased. Each is chosen because they are popular, easy-to-grow, widely adaptable, genetically diverse, and versatile.

**2012 Year of the Geranium:** The bedding plants gardeners plant out in late spring and bring inside in autumn are commonly known as geraniums; but geraniums they are not. They are pelargoniums. True geraniums are the cranesbills, hardy North American and European herbaceous perennials; while pelargoniums are semi-tender or tender plants, mostly from South Africa, that have graced our gardens with their large flowers for decades.

**2012 Year of the Heuchera:** Heucheras are all-American. Different species hail from the islands off the California coast to the highest mountains in the Rockies to the Gulf of Mexico. With this diverse range of habitat, these plants are able to find a niche in everyone's garden. Breeders in America and Europe have taken a well-aimed swipe of a paintbrush between these species, and have assembled a plethora of plants with amazing flower and foliage forms that didn't exist a scant ten years ago. Not only are these plants aesthetically pleasing, but they have become stronger, fuller, and more disease resistant. With few pests, great adaptability to containers and a seemingly unending number of forms, heuchera should be in everyone's garden!

**2012 Year of the Herbs:** Herbs are defined as plants (trees, shrubs, vines, perennials, biennials or annuals) valued historically, presently, or potentially for their flavor, fragrance, medicinal qualities, insecticidal qualities, economic or industrial use, or in the case of dyes, for the coloring material they

provide. This definition defines herbs by their usefulness, rather than by their appearance or botanical structure. Thus, trees (such as witch hazel), bulbs (such as garlic) and shrubs (such as boxwood) are included.

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**?? Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association:** ([www.fngla.org](http://www.fngla.org)) Sponsored by FNGLA, the Florida Garden Select program is designed to promote the use of superior and proven Florida plants. Benefiting growers, garden centers and consumers alike, Florida Garden Select plants are ideal for most Florida gardens. Many of the selected plants can reach outside Florida and into most Southern States. Use the zone feature to locate plants specific to your growing zone. Florida Garden Select plants have been deemed superior plants for Florida's environment by a jury of growers, horticulturists, retailers, landscape professionals and University of Florida faculty members. The program is over a decade old having spent much of the first decade as the Florida Plants of the Year program.

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\*Beach Sunflower, *Helianthus debilis*, is a native groundcover that grows in Hardiness zones 8-11. It's best used in coastal landscapes. It's drought- and salt-tolerant and thrives in full sun. This spreading perennial produces small yellow sunflower-like blooms much of the year. Here in North Florida, the plants usually die back in winter and regrow in spring.

\*Drift Series Rose, *Rosa* x 'Drift' series, will grow in Hardiness zones 5-10. This miniature shrub rose grows 18-20 inches in height with a 2-3 foot spread. Used as a groundcover or in containers, this series is disease- and drought-tolerant and produces small flowers repeatedly.

\*Mule Palm, x *Butiagrus nabonnandii*, is a hybrid made by crossing the cold-hardy pindo palm with the more tropical queen palm. The result is a cold-hardy palm with a tropical feel that grows in Hardiness zones 8-11. It is salt-tolerant but needs good drainage.

\*Pond Cypress, *Taxodium ascendens*, is an underused native tree that looks very similar to the bald cypress. Despite its name, it has surprising drought tolerance once established. Another surprise is that it drops its needle-like leaves during the fall. But come spring, it produces light feathery foliage. It grows in Hardiness zones 5-10.

\*Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, has fragrant, edible foliage and grows in Hardiness zones 8-11. This short-lived perennial blooms profusely in full sun with the more common bluish purple flowers. But white to pink flowers are seen on some selections. Its form is an informal mound reaching a height of about 1 foot with equal spread.

\*Slender Weaver's Bamboo, *Bambusa textilis* var. *gracilis*, is a clumping, low-maintenance bamboo described as having a small footprint even at maturity. This graceful, fast growing bamboo grows 20-30 feet in height in Hardiness zones 8-11.

\*Sun Parasol Mandevilla, *Mandevilla* x 'Sun Parasol' series, is a tropical, cold-tender perennial vine that is recommended for Hardiness zones 10-11. Even though it may function as an annual in North Florida, it's worth the long bloom cycles of pink flowers during spring, summer and fall.

**Hosta Society:** Since 1996 the members of the American Hosta Growers Association, have selected a Hosta based on outstanding merits. These Hostas have exceptionally decorative foliage, showy or fragrant flowers, and perform well throughout their hardiness zones 3-9. Generally shade lovers but some can tolerate some sun. They like enriched soils and mulching is needed to prevent soil spattering from the rain. Pests include snails and slugs.

**Hosta 'Liberty'** grows as a vase-shaped mound, with a blue green center and a 2 to 2 1/2 inch margin that changes from yellow to creamy white. It is a tetraploid with pale lavender flowers that bloom from late July to August.

**Perennial Plant Association:** How is the Perennial Plant of the Year selected?

PPA members vote for the Perennial Plant of the Year™ each summer. At that time, in addition to the vote, each member may also nominate up to two plants for future consideration. The Perennial Plant of the Year™ committee reviews the nominated perennials (more than 400 different perennials are often nominated each year) and selects 3 to or 4 perennials to be placed on the ballot.

Nominations generally need to satisfy the following criteria:

- \*Suitability for a wide range of climatic conditions
- \*Low-maintenance requirements
- \*Relative pest- and disease-resistance
- \*Ready availability in the year of promotion
- \*Multiple seasons of ornamental interest

The garden media receives the Perennial Plant of the Year™ announcement in the fall prior to the introduction so that they may begin the publicity that accompanies the choice.

***Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost'** grows 18 inches tall and 18 inches wide in a mounded form. This hardy perennial grows well in hardiness zones 3 to 8. Brunneras are treasured for their shade tolerance and early baby-blue, forget-me-not like flowers. *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' has enchanting silvery leaves with green venation and a thin green margin. One common name for this perennial is heartleaf brunnera because the emerging leaf enlarges to a heart shape.

**Light:** Plants thrive in the shade but will tolerate morning sun if the soil conditions remain moist. By midday, shade is essential, particularly in southern gardens.

**Soil:** This perennial performs best in shady areas with good moisture retentive soils.

**Hardiness:** USDA Zones 3 to 8

**Uses:** 'Jack Frost' brunnera may be used along the front of the shade border, is excellent in a container, or can be combined with other ground cover perennials such as hostas, ferns, and epimediums. The silver foliage lights up a dark garden from spring to fall.

**Unique Qualities:** From mid to late spring, blue, forget-me-not like blossoms are held in clusters several inches above the brilliant frosty silver leaves. The rough leaf texture makes this perennial less palatable to browsing deer.