



For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

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PROBLEM-SOLVING PLANTS

by Katie Elzer-Peters

LAWNDALE, CA In a perfect world, we'd have perfect soil, perfect light, and perfect weather with just the right amount of rain, not too much wind and few problems from pests and diseases.

Instead, each gardener has a cornucopia of varying conditions to contend with in order to grow a gorgeous landscape. Some plants are better than others to meet gardening challenges. Some plants are overused in specific applications. This year, we encourage you to try new solutions to old problems. Here are our best plants to beat tricky landscape and garden problems.

Big Color for Dry Areas

Unpredictable weather patterns are becoming routine with lower-than-normal precipitation at the top of the list of challenges for many geographic areas. What's a gardener or designer to do when charged with covering ground without raising the water bill? The old way involved rocks or mulch. The new way means picking the right plants. There's no need to sacrifice color for sustainability. Flower Carpet® roses and Storm™ agapanthus are two outstanding choices for water-wise landscaping.

Nan Sterman, author of "Hot Color, Dry Garden," specifically recommends Flower Carpet roses for people who struggle to grow roses in a dry garden. "Flower Carpet roses are among the most drought-tolerant roses, especially in coastal Mediterranean climates," she said.



Flower Carpet 'Pink' and 'Red' thrive in a northern CA vineyard courtyard.

Award-winning Flower Carpet roses have two-tier root systems that allow them to weather drought conditions without slowing down. Surface roots quickly grab new moisture from rain or watering, while established plants develop taproots that reach lower-level groundwater sources. In addition to thriving during dry weather, Flower Carpet roses are disease, heat and humidity resistant. They're perfect for use in flower beds and large commercial plantings, and to stabilize slopes.

Storm agapanthus are equally useful and beautiful in dry landscapes. Compact growers, these prolific and uniform bloomers can produce up to 100 flowers on each plant. Hardy in USDA zones 8-11, Storm agapanthus are available with blue or white flowers. Thunder Storm has blue flowers with cream and green variegated foliage for added interest. Gardeners and landscape designers working in fire-prone landscapes are increasingly turning to this plant for its fire-retardant fleshy leaves.



Storm agapanthus mass planted at an LAX parking area.



Easy-Care Late Season Color

By the time fall rolls around, many garden plants are bloomed out, eaten up or beaten down by summer weather. Not so with Volcano® phlox. When everything else is giving up for the year, they're just getting started. Gardeners say they love the compact stature, fragrance and long bloom time of [Volcano phlox](#).

Lorraine Ballato, author of “Success with Hydrangeas: A Gardener’s Guide” and “Successful Self Watering Containers,” said she loves Volcano phlox for later season color.

“Powdery mildew is nonexistent with them and there’s no need to stake them, either,” she said. “I abandoned staking years ago when I attacked my garden maintenance chores and streamlined them. I also banished all powdery mildew magnets from the garden.”

Volcano phlox are nearly completely resistant to powdery mildew. That, combined with their growth habit, brightly colored and numerous blooms, make them musts for late-season color. Gardeners can choose from varieties with pink, purple, lilac, rose and bi-color flowers.

Volcano phlox 'Pink with Red Eye' blooms for months!

Container Thrillers

Container planters flanking the entrance to homes and commercial properties or beautifying walkways and streets require color and drama. It also helps if the plants are nearly bulletproof and will survive adverse conditions like heat, moisture fluctuations and “interaction” with the public. Too often, gardeners use nothing but tough evergreens because they can take a beating. There’s another solution, one with color — actually, two. Tropicanna® cannas and Bonfire® begonias both add big color to containers with little work required after planting.

Jodi Torpey, author of “The Colorado Gardener’s Companion” and editor-in-chief of [WesternGardeners.com](#), said [Tropicanna](#) is her plant of choice to create a lush, tropical look. Even when not in flower, the foliage is stunning.

“When I wanted to create a tropical patio paradise, I chose Tropicanna canna for its beautiful multicolored leaves and tangerine-orange flowers,” she said. “These made for easy-care container plantings that did especially well with morning sun and afternoon shade in my high-altitude, zone 5 garden. The flowers are absolutely gorgeous!”

Bonfire begonias have a more trailing habit, while Tropicannas are upright in stature. Overall, though, they still grow to be quite large later in the summer, and make excellent companions for Tropicannas. Happy in full sun to partial shade, in wet or somewhat dry conditions, [Bonfire](#) produces cascades of red bell-shaped flowers that will fill in around the canna plants’ base.



Tropicanna makes the ideal “thriller” in this mixed container.



Magnolia Felix® is an upright tree, growing to only 16 feet high, but producing large 12" open-faced hot pink deliciously fragrant flowers each spring.

Flowering Trees for Small Spaces

Small space gardening is more than a buzzword or catch phrase. It's a reality for individuals and families downsizing into patio homes, town homes and neighborhoods with reduced yards. Avid gardeners still want to enjoy a slice of earth, albeit a smaller one, and everyone appreciates a bit of beauty in the form of a flowering tree.

Jury magnolias are small in stature but big in color. Large, striking blooms that measure 6-12 inches wide in shades of cream, burgundy, pink and deep purple open in the spring. Plants top out at a maximum of 12-15 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide, making them spectacular specimens for small spaces. (Say that five times fast!)



With its fragrant 5" blossoms and upright columnar growth habit, Magnolia Burgundy Star® is ideal for small spaces.



With their glossy green leaves, Fairy Magnolias – available in 'Blush,' 'White' or 'Cream' – makes a great hedge even when not in bloom.

Plants for Privacy

Why grow a yew hedge when you can enjoy flowers instead? When the setting calls for a less-formal look, **Fairy Magnolias** are an elegant alternative to needleleaf evergreens. Hardy in zones 8-11, Fairy Magnolias® have a compact, bushy growth habit with dark green, glossy leaves, russet-colored buds many weeks before flowering and, as the piece de resistance, an abundance of very fragrant blush, cream or white flowers. Reaching a maximum height and spread of 12-15 feet, Fairy Magnolias live up to their promise: all the magnolia beauty with an abundance of flowers and fragrance. It's easy to grow into a hedge for property screening with a twist, but equally beautiful as a specimen or focal point.

Gardening, landscaping, and landscape maintenance is less work and more rewarding with the right plants in the right place. (There's a reason so many garden designers use that as their mantra: it works.)

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Media Information

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