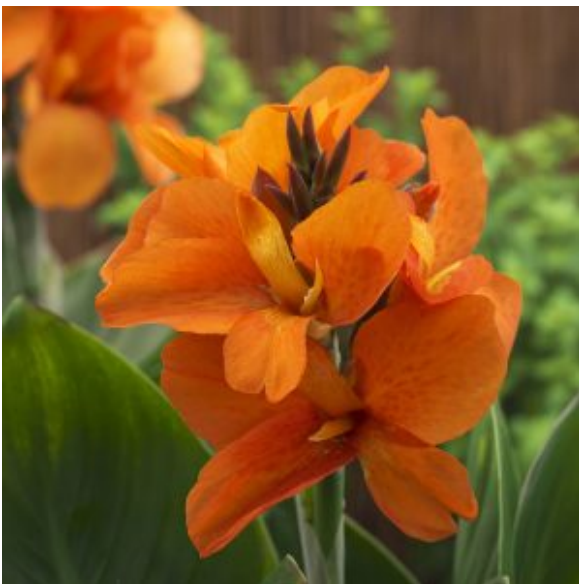


Winning flowers for Mother's Day

By Melinda Myers

Give mom a gift that provides beauty all season long with minimal care. A basket, container or garden bed filled with these award-winning annuals is sure to generate a smile and enjoyment all summer long.

If mom likes to garden, provide her with a few seeds, potting mix and a container. Include a few new varieties of traditional favorites. Marigold Super Hero Spry is a compact French marigold with 2 inch dark maroon and golden yellow flowers. The striking bicolor blooms top 10- to 12-inch-tall plants. Best of all, mom will have flowers eight weeks from the time she sows the seeds until frost.



Canna South Pacific Orange is a compact vigorous variety with large leaves and blossoms that attract hummingbirds. Photo/All-America Selections

Surprise mom with a container of instant beauty. The 2017 All-America Selections (AAS) winner Calliope Medium Dark red is beautiful alone or mixed with other flowers in containers, hanging baskets or in-ground gardens. It was selected by AAS, a nonprofit national plant trialing organization, for its outstanding performance for home gardens.

Brocade Fire and Brocade Cherry Night are two more winning geraniums selected for their striking foliage and colorful blooms. The semi-double orange flowers and green and bronze foliage are sure to brighten any garden location or container. The green edged bronze leaves and red blooms of Brocade Cherry Night will surely impress mom and any of her visitors.

Or provide some added seasonal interest with Pinto Premium White to Rose geranium. Mom will enjoy watching the flower petals change from white to pink to rose-pink. The change occurs over time, providing interesting color combinations throughout the growing season.

Help mom bring the birds, butterflies and bees to her garden with a few sunflowers. They're easy to start from seed right in the garden and mom will enjoy the motion and color the visiting pollinators provide. Don't let a lack of space stop your mother from enjoying these colorful beauties. Suntastic Yellow with Black Center produces 5- to 6-inch flowers on 20-inch plants; perfect for containers and small space gardens.

Grow the taller, 4- to 5-inch-tall Ring of Fire sunflower for its unique blooms. The flower's chocolate brown center is surrounded by a ring of red and golden tipped petals. Mom can cut a few blooms to enjoy in a vase and allow the rest to set seed for wildlife to enjoy.

Add more wow to mom's garden with Onyx red ornamental pepper. The dark black foliage contrasts nicely with the shiny red fruit. Its stunning beauty adds ornamental appeal to containers and garden beds. Ornamental peppers are edible but

very hot, so it's best to look and not taste. Or include the family-friendly Chilly Chili ornamental pepper for all the beauty without the heat. Perfect for families with young children that like to explore. The abundant upright fruit changes from yellow to orange to red, providing a wonderful display throughout the season.

Bring the tropics to your mom's patio or deck with cannas. Their large foliage and bright colored flowers make any home feel like an exotic escape. South Pacific Orange, South Pacific Scarlet and Tropical Rose are compact vigorous varieties suited to containers and the garden. The large leaves add drama to the garden and once their blossoms emerge they'll provide lots of color and hummingbird appeal.

Make this Mother's Day one you and your mother will remember throughout the summer. Give her a gift of winning beauties to brighten her containers, gardens and uplift her spirits all season long.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening." She hosts the Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" gardening DVD series and the nationally syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" TV and radio segments.