



PLANTS OF THE YEAR 2011

By Mary Collins, Marilyn Griffiths and Martha Kent

For seven years, Fairchild Horticulturists have selected plants that represent true horticultural excellence.

We call these our Plants of the Year, and we are pleased to announce the new slate of winners for 2011.

Past winners include:

Byrsonima lucida, locust berry

Clusia lanceolata

Coccothrinax argentata, silver palm

Cryosophila stauracantha, root-spine palm

Euphorbia punicea, flame of Jamaica

Guaiacum sanctum, lignum vitae

Muhlenbergia capillaris, muhly grass

Myrcianthes fragrans, Simpson's stopper

Nashia inaguensis, Moujean tea

Neomarica caerulea, twelve apostles

Neoregelia 'Fireball'

Pimenta racemosa, bayrum

Plumeria pudica, bridal bouquet

Senna polyphylla, desert senna

Stemmadenia litoralis, milky way tree

Tecomanthe dendrophila, New Guinea trumpet creeper

The 2011 Plants of the Year are two very different plants. Each has distinctive characteristics to add interest to your garden—for humans and for wildlife. *Hamelia patens* is a supreme wildlife attractor, drawing birds and butterflies with colorful flowers and abundant nectar. *Petrea volubilis* creates profuse clusters of stunning blue-purple blossoms. Look for these plants at our upcoming plant sales.



Photo by Mary Collins/FBC



Photo by Marilyn Griffiths/FBC

Petrea volubilis

Botanical name: *Petrea volubilis*

Family: Verbenaceae

Common name: Queen’s wreath, sandpaper vine

Native to: Central America, Brazil to West Indies

Habit: Evergreen vine

Flower: Blue-purple clusters in late winter and spring

Growing conditions: Full sun, well-drained soil, no irrigation once established

Propagation: Seed, cuttings, air layers

Comments: Climber suited for trellis or other support or can be shaped into a scrambling shrub

Locations in Fairchild: In front of the Garden House and in the courtyard behind the gallery building

Petrea volubilis, known as Queen’s wreath, produces masses of blue to purple flowers in 12-inch-long spikes in spring and during other dry periods as well. Native from Mexico through Central America, the Queen’s wreath thrives in a hot, sunny location and once established, needs no irrigation. It may be planted in a western exposure and will delight you with a wonderful show of flowers in spring. Sometimes known as sandpaper vine, the texture of the leaves is like fine sandpaper. This vine may be grown on a trellis, fence, or wall, or trimmed as a scrambling shrub with no support. An interesting ornamental trait of Queen’s wreath is that, while the blue-purple flowers last only a few days, the showy purple calyces remain, fading to blue then finally to pale gray, which is attractive against the dark foliage. As the flowers fade they fall in a pinwheel fashion, bringing one last delight.

Hamelia patens

Botanical name: *Hamelia patens*

Family: Rubiaceae

Common name: firebush

Native to: Peninsular Florida, the West Indies, Mexico, Central America and South America

Habit: Evergreen shrub to small tree with multiple trunks that grow to about 10 feet high

Flower: Clustered slender orange-red tubular flowers on red stems throughout the year


Fruit: Small rounded reddish berries ripening to dark purplish-black

Growing conditions: Any well-drained soil in sun to partial shade

Propagation: Seeds or soft wood cuttings in spring

Comments: Fast growing plant ideal for attracting butterflies and birds, including hummingbirds

Location in Fairchild: In Plot 3a, south of the Vine Pergola

Hamelia patens, firebush, is a shrub to small tree with showy red-orange flowers all year. A South Florida native, the firebush is a wonderful ornamental choice for attracting wildlife to your garden. Hummingbirds and butterflies visit the ubiquitous flowers for nectar and many types of birds, especially mockingbirds and catbirds, love the dark red to black fruit. The leaves are also colorful, with red veins and petioles. Firebush may be grown as a shrub or shaped to make a small tree. It can be planted in full sun or light shade and requires no irrigation once established. Firebush is a fine plant that can be used as an accent or combined with other plants in a butterfly garden or hedge. 



Descriptions, images and cultural requirements for all of these plants can be found on our website at www.fairchildgarden.org/PlantsoftheYear.