

# *Georgia Gold Medal Winners*

## *2009*



Bodie Pennisi



Online Plant Guide



Flickr.com

Gary L. Wade and Bodie V. Pennisi  
*Department of Horticulture*

Each year, an elite group of Green Industry and academic professionals from throughout Georgia convene to select a slate of outstanding ornamental plants in five categories: annual flower, herbaceous perennial, vine, shrub and tree. Only one plant in each category can earn the Plant Selection Committee's coveted Gold Medal Award.

The nominees are judged on a strict list of criteria, including pest tolerance, ease of maintenance, survivability, seasonal interest and availability. The list of nominees is long and the selection process is tedious, but in the end, all on the committee agree that the plants chosen are deserving of their Gold Medal designation.

Like previous winners, the 2009 selections represent the best of the best in their respective categories, including a low-maintenance annual flower that provides an explosion of blooms from summer through fall, a herbaceous perennial with a soft foliage texture and outstanding fall color, an evergreen flowering vine with few pest problems, a flowering shrub with outstanding fall fragrance, and a tree that is sure to be the focal point in any landscape.

The following is a brief description of each of the 2009 winners. Look for them in your local garden center or nursery. And remember:

*When You Take Home a Georgia Gold Medal Plant, You Take Home a Winner!*



## SUMMER ANNUAL

*Summer Snapdragon*

*Angelonia angustifolia*

*Full Sun*

Summer snapdragon, *Angelonia angustifolia*, is one of the hottest new summer annuals on the market today. Landscape professionals and horticulturists are raving about its heat and drought tolerance, extended bloom period and performance in the landscape. *Better Homes and Gardens* magazine listed it as one of the top 20 annuals of 2008.

The flowers of summer snapdragon look a lot like those of its cousin, the winter snapdragon; however, summer snapdragon likes summer heat, not winter cold. Native to Mexico and the West Indies, summer snapdragon over-winters in most of Florida but is best treated as an annual north of the Florida border.

Summer snapdragons are available in a wide range of colors, including white, rose, lilac, violet, blue and many shades in between. Some cultivars have speckled or bicolor flowers.

Flowering occurs over an eight- to 10-week period in summer, peaking in June and July. In coastal Georgia, well-established plants have been shown to over-winter.

Plants have a bushy growth habit and reach 18 to 24 inches tall. They are quite vigorous and may flop over in late summer. If this happens, cut them back to stimulate new growth and additional blooms in fall. Flower spikes consist of about a dozen flowers, each approximately 1 inch across. They open in sequence from the bottom of the spike upward. The flowers hold up well in floral arrangements.

Plant summer snapdragon in full sun and well-drained soil. Set plants 12 inches apart. They also can be grown in patio containers and look particularly nice when combined with plants that have gray leaves, like wormwood, silver plectranthus or lamb's ear.

A slow-release fertilizer, such as Osmocote, incorporated into soil at planting time will ensure uniform growth. Supplement the granular fertilizer with liquid feed, as needed, to keep plants looking their best. Let the plants dry out between waterings but be prepared to provide supplemental irrigation during dry spells.

Summer snapdragon can be grown from seed, summer tip cuttings or division of the root mass.

Bodie Pennisi



Bodie Pennisi

## HERBACEOUS PERENNIAL

*Arkansas Blue Star, Amsonia hubrectii*

*Hardiness Zones 4 to 10*

*Full Sun to Partial Shade*

Although native to the south central United States, Arkansas blue star (*Amsonia hubrectii*) has not been widely available in the nursery trade until recently. However, once gardeners and landscapers discover the wonderful qualities of this plant, they will wonder how it could have been overlooked for so long.

Arkansas blue star is a clumping herbaceous perennial, reaching 3 feet tall and wide. Numerous upright shoots bearing thread-like leaves emerge from the base and have a delicate, feather-like appearance. In spring, light-blue star-shaped flowers with a yellow center are borne along the upper portions of the stem and persist for three to four weeks. The early flowers are the most visible since the foliage often masks those formed later.

The real show begins in fall when the foliage turns golden yellow and literally glows when the sun strikes it. It's a showstopper when planted in groups of three or more plants and backed up by taller evergreens, ornamental grasses or plants with burgundy foliage, like pink loropetalum. After the fall display, the foliage turns brown but continues to add interest in the winter landscape.

Cut back Arkansas blue star in early spring to make way for new shoots originating from the base. The plant is moderately slow to get started, but, like fine wine, it improves with age. As parent clumps age, the plant fills out and becomes more attractive as the number of shoots from the base of the plant increases.

Once it is established, Arkansas blue star is drought-tolerant and low-maintenance. It's also deer tolerant, a feature a growing number of gardeners look for today.

Use Arkansas blue star in rock gardens, perennial borders or meadows. It is propagated from seed, summer stem cuttings or division.







## EVERGREEN VINE

*Armand Clematis, Clematis armandii*

*Hardiness Zones 7 to 9*

*Full Sun to Partial Shade*

Unlike other clematis that are prized for their flowers, armand clematis (*Clematis armandii*) would be a great vine even if it didn't flower. Its glossy, evergreen leaves are attractive year round and provide visual interest to fences, arbors, trellises, walls or pergolas.

Spring flowers are an added bonus of armand clematis. White, fragrant, star-shaped flowers appear in March in

Athens, Ga., (earlier in more southern zones) and persist nearly a month. Flowers have a spicy, subtle fragrance that is not overpowering. They are about 2 ½ inches across and are borne in panicles from the previous season's growth.

Armand clematis leaves are about 3 inches long and 1 to 2 ½ inches wide. Clusters of three leaves, called leaflets, emerge from a single point along the stem.

Expect armand clematis to grow 20 to 30 feet by the end of two to three growing seasons. It is not nearly as aggressive as wisteria, confederate jasmine or Carolina jessamine, which require regular pruning during the growing season to prevent them from becoming overgrown. It can be kept in bounds with light pruning after flowering and an occasional snip or two during the growing season. Because it flowers on the previous season's growth, avoid pruning it after mid-July.

Armand clematis can be grown in most areas of Georgia, except the extreme north Georgia mountains where winter temperatures sometimes dip into the single digits. Winter protection is advised when temperatures dip into the low teens.

Plant armand clematis in moist, well-drained soils and full sun to partial shade. It is not particularly drought tolerant, so it will require some moisture during periods of limited rainfall. It can be propagated from summer cuttings or by layering.



## EVERGREEN SHRUB

*Fragrant Tea Olive, Osmanthus fragrans*

*Hardiness Zones 7 to 10*

*Full Sun to Partial Shade*

For a heavenly scent in the landscape, plant fragrant tea olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*). Its sweet perfume is a pleasant surprise in September and October, a time when other plants are tapering off in their growth and preparing for their winter rest. One whiff of its intoxicating fragrance and you'll fall in love with this award-winning plant.

Fragrance is not the only merit that earned fragrant tea olive a Georgia Gold Medal Award. It's also a tough, low-maintenance plant with few pest problems, and it adapts to a wide range of soils, from coastal sands to Piedmont clays.

Classified as a large shrub, fragrant tea olive reaches 20 to 30 feet tall and wide. It is best used as a background plant in a perennial border, a specimen plant or an evergreen hedge. It is easily trained into a small evergreen tree. It also can be used to soften corners of the home, but its large stature rules out its use at the doorway or under low windows.

Creamy white flowers are often hidden among the foliage and are not usually noticeable until their fragrance infiltrates the landscape. There are several fragrant tea olive cultivars in the trade, such as "apricot gold," which produces apricot-gold flowers, and "butter yellow," which produces creamy yellow flowers.

Fragrant tea olive hails from China where it is commonly called cassia flower. There the flowers are harvested for their fragrance, which is extracted and infused in teas, jams, cakes, soups, soaps and perfumes.

Fragrant tea olive is sensitive to cold injury when temperatures dip into the single digits and can be killed at temperatures below zero. In the upper range of hardiness zone 7 and in zone 6 (north Georgia mountains), fortune's tea olive (*Osmanthus x fortunei*) may be a better choice. It has a similar growth habit with the same delightful fragrance and better cold hardiness than fragrant tea olive.

Fertilize fragrant tea olive in early spring with a complete fertilizer, such as 16-4-8. Look for a fertilizer containing slow-release nitrogen. Azalea/camellia-type fertilizer can also be used. Prune as necessary during the growing season to shape the plant into the desired growth form.







## DECIDUOUS TREE

*Lavender Twist® Redbud,*

*Cercis canadensis "Covey" P.P. 10328*

*Hardiness Zones 4 to 9*

*Full Sun to Partial Shade*

Landscape architects talk about creating a focal point when designing a landscape — one that draws the eye to a particular spot. This is often done with statuary, a fountain or a gazing ball. A plant can also be used as a focal point, but the plant has to have special features and year-round interest that attracts the attention of visitors every month of the year. One such plant is lavender twist redbud.

In spring, lavender twist redbud begins the show with lavender-pink pea-like blossoms borne along its cascading branches, like sprays from a fountain. Soon after flowering, heart-shaped leaves emerge, and the tree assumes

an umbrella-like form in the summer landscape. Finally, when winter arrives and the leaves drop, the tree becomes a living sculpture in the landscape with zig-zag branches, a contorted trunk and persistent pea-like seed pods that hang from its weeping branches. Each tree develops a different and unique growth habit, and no two trees look alike.



Lavender twist redbud is a weeping form of our native redbud, discovered in 1991 in Westfield, NY, in the garden of Connie Covey. At that time, the tree was about 35 years old, 4.5 feet tall and 7 feet wide with a trunk diameter of about 6 inches. One of the unique features of the tree, other than its growth habit, is that it goes dormant early, before the first frost. This early dormancy makes it more winter hardy and able to adapt to areas as far north as Maine and Minnesota.

Lavender twist redbud is a small tree, growing up to 15 feet tall and wide. It prefers moist, well-drained soils and full sun to partial shade. It's a slow grower, so patience is a virtue with this plant. Blossoms form at an early age, often the first year, and flowering improves with age and size.

Lavender twist redbud also can be planted in clusters of three to five plants for extra accent or in a large container for the patio or poolside. Staking and training are needed if an upright growth habit is desired. Otherwise, the plant will assume a more weeping form. The tree is patented and is grown via grafting onto a rootstock only by licensed growers.



## Georgia Gold Medal Winners 1994 to 2008

### 1994 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Bath's Pink Dianthus (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus*) "Bath's Pink"  
Homestead Purple Verbena (*Verbena canadensis*) "Homestead Purple"  
Mount Airy Fothergilla (*Fothergilla major*) "Mount Airy"  
Japanese Plum Yew (low forms) (*Cephalotaxus harringtonia*) low forms

### 1995 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

New Gold Lantana (*Lantana camara*) "New Gold"  
Blue Anise Sage (*Salvia guaranitica*)  
Annabelle Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) "Annabelle"  
Athena® Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) Athena®

### 1996 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Purple Wave Petunia (*Petunia hybrida*) "Purple Wave"  
Wild Indigo (*Baptisia* spp.)  
Hummingbird Clethra (*Clethra alnifolia*) "Hummingbird"  
Lipan Crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) "Lipan"  
Sioux Crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) "Sioux"  
Tonto Crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) "Tonto"  
Yuma Crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) "Yuma"

### 1997 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Blue Fan Flower (*Scaevola aemula*) "New Blue Wonder"  
Three Lobed Coneflower (*Rudbeckia triloba*)  
Pink Chinese Loropetalum (*Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum*)  
Yoshino Japanese Cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) "Yoshino"

### 1998 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Athens Gem Plectranthus (*Plectranthus*) "Athens Gem"  
Japanese Aster, Kalimeris (*Kalimeris pinnatifida*, *Asteromoea mongolica*)  
Bottlebrush Buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*)  
Trident Maple (*Acer buergerianum*)

### 1999 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Nova Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*) "Nova"  
Lenten Rose (*Helleborus orientalis*)  
Mohawk Viburnum (*Viburnum x burkwoodii*) "Mohawk"  
American Yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*)

### 2000 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Sun Coleus (*Coleus x hybridus*) (10 to 15 cultivars, such as "Solar Sunrise," "Alabama Sunset" and "Amazon")  
David and Robert Poore Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) "David & Robert Poore"  
Alice Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) "Alice"  
Little Gem Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) "Little Gem"

### 2001 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Ornamental Sweet Potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) (Blackie, Margarita, Tri-color)  
Autumn Fern (*Dryopteris erythrosora*)  
Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)  
Chastetree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)

### 2002 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Lady in Red Salvia (*Salvia coccinea*) "Lady in Red"  
Blue Mist and Worcester Gold Bluebeards (*Caryopteris clandonensis*) "Blue Mist" and "Worcester Gold"  
Purple Beauty Berry (*Callicarpa dichotoma*)  
Forest Pansy, Oklahoma & Texas White Redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*) "Forest Pansy," "Oklahoma" and "Texas White"

### 2003 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Mexican Zinnia - Star Series (*Zinnia angustifolia*) "Star Series"  
Miss Huff Lantana (*Lantana camara*) "Miss Huff"  
Crossvine (species and cultivars) (*Bignonia capreolata*)  
Henry Anise Tree (*Illicium henryi*)  
Chinese Fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*)

### 2004 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Chartreuse Joseph's Coat (*Alternanthera ficoidea*) "Chartreuse"  
Hybrid Hyssop ("Tutti Fruitti," "Firebird," "Apricot Sunrise," and "Blue Fortune") (*Agastache* hybrids)  
Summer Snowflake Viburnum (*Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum*) "Summer Snowflake"  
Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)

### 2005 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Begonia "Dragon Wings" (*Begonia X hybrida*)  
Veronica "Georgia Blue" (*Veronica peduncularis*)  
Creeping Raspberry (*Rubus calycioides*)  
Canyon Creek and Rose Creek Abelia (*Abelia*) "Canyon Creek" and "Rose Creek"  
Glowing Embers Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*) "Glowing Embers"

### 2006 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Cuphea Selections and Cultivars (*Cuphea* spp.)  
Perennial Plumbago (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*)  
Wisteria "Amethyst Falls" (*Wisteria frutescens*) "Amethyst Falls"  
Chinese Snowball Viburnum (*Viburnum macrocephalum*)  
Overcup Oak (*Quercus lyrata*)

### 2007 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Firespike (*Odontonema strictum*)  
Swamp Hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*)  
Madison Confederate Jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) "Madison"  
Admiral Semmes Azalea (*Rhododendron*) "Admiral Semmes"  
Green Giant Arborvitae (*Thuja plicata*) "Green Giant"

### 2008 Georgia Gold Medal Winners:

Amazon Dianthus Series (*Dianthus barbatus*) "Amazon" series  
Rozanne Cranesbill Geranium (*Geranium*) "Rozanne"  
Pride of Augusta Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) "Pride of Augusta"  
Paperbush (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*)  
American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

For descriptions and cultural information on the plants listed, see [www.georgiagoldmedalplants.org](http://www.georgiagoldmedalplants.org)

*Take Home a Georgia Gold Medal Plant...and Take Home a Winner!*

**Learning for Life**

Circular 908-2

March 2009

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating. Cooperative Extension, the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, gender or disability.

**An Equal Opportunity Employer/Affirmative Action Organization  
Committed to a Diverse Work Force**