GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Combinations With Coleus

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Combo 1



Combo 2

As a combination designer, I'm always searching for vegetative textural components that elevate a mix. But finding options that grow well together with the other flowering components while also feeling fresh and inspired can be a challenge.

Coleus has always been one of my favorite trailing foliage components. There are so many vibrant colors and textures to choose from, and they're versatile enough to work with both full sun and shade components.

My only complaint with some of the more colorful varieties has been that they flower too early. However, new genetics on the market for 2023 offer a fantastic fix with the Trailblazer collection of coleus from Ball FloraPlant.

The Trailblazer collection of high-performing basket coleus has deep, saturated color and is very late to never flowering. There are currently two varieties, so let's explore a combo design using each of them below.

Combo 1: Trailblazer Glory Road is a medium-vigor, free-branching choice with peachy-pink leaves and a bright green serrated edge. When mixing with this genetic, I like to pair it with other medium-vigor plants that have mounded habits and good heat tolerance. Ball FloraPlant's Calibrachoa series Cha-Cha is an excellent pick. Try Cha-Cha Diva Apricot or Cha-Cha Yellow to draw out the peachy undertones of this coleus.

Combo 2: Trailblazer Road Trip is a more vigorous trailing variety with deep burgundy leaves and an electric pink

center. Finding companion plants for this genetic comes down to higher vigor, as well as finding bright and colorful flowers to contrast the darker foliage. Petunia Bee's Knees is a top choice to brighten up any combination and its trailing habit matches well.

Another suggestion would be any of the Firehouse Verbena colors. This series has a medium-vigor trailing spec. I like using Firehouse Burgundy because it emphasizes the pink center of the coleus.

Crop time and temperatures

Producing combinations with TrailBlazer Coleus should take no longer than 14 weeks in a hanging basket. Coleus can be delayed or stunted in a combination under cooler temperatures, as they're a heat-loving crop. Ensure that night temperatures stay well above 59F (15C) and within a range of 59 to 70F (15 to 21C). Daytime temperatures should be maintained between 74 to 85F (23 to 29C).

Orientation of components at transplant

There are many variations for how a combination could get planted. Rooting strategy, pot size, input cost limitations and desired visual outcome can all be altered to a grower's preference. For a co-mingled look, like a MixMasters combo, transplant three larger multi-stuck cells in a triangle pattern. If a thriller-filler-spiller design is desired, transplant one to two cells per variety towards the outer edge of the pot and consider adding a thriller item with height to the center.

Pinching

TrailBlazer Coleus is free-branching, so a pinch isn't necessary in a quart to gallon size pot. However, if the intended pot size is a larger 12- to 16-in. hanging basket, then a pinch is recommended, along with the other components in the combination. This will ensure the coleus can be seen from any side of the hanging basket.

PGRs

During propagation, avoid stretch by applying a Florel spray of 250 to 500 ppm. Transplant on time. A B-Nine spray (1,500 to 2,000 ppm) 10 to 12 days after stick can help to reduce stem elongation.

Before shipping, a B-Nine 2,500 to 3,500 ppm and Cycocel 1,000 to 1,500 tank mix or a 2 ppm Bonzi drench can be used to maintain habit as needed. **GT**

Becky Lacy is the lauded "Combo Queen" of Ball FloraPlant and an active product manager at the company's Arroyo Grande facility in California. Find more culture tips and recommendations at www.ballfloraplant.com.