

BIRDS & BLOOMS *extra*

#1
BIRD & GARDEN
MAGAZINE
IN AMERICA

BEAUTY IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

*it's
nesting
time*

BE A BIRD LANDLORD
TO DOZENS OF SPECIES

3 SIMPLE STEPS
TO PERFECT GARDEN CONTAINERS

WHY WE'RE OBSESSED WITH
**BALTIMORE
ORIOLES**



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MUST-TRY
BLACK
BLOOMS



NORTHERN
FLICKER

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7 attract orioles

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visit our blog!

We've got great bloggers who are always creating thrifty, recycled DIY projects for you to replicate in your own backyard. For example, blogger Noelle tells you how to turn an empty wine bottle into a tool for watering.

Check out our talented bloggers at birdsandblossomsblog.com to see what else they've come up with!

also find us on



Top
10

1

black plants

The new black is just black when it comes to the world of horticulture. Check out some of our favorites.

By Stacy Tornio

When I first heard about black plants, I didn't understand what the fuss was all about. Plants and flowers are supposed to be bright and colorful. Why would anyone want dark and dreary?

But then I saw my first black petunia—wow! I couldn't believe how gorgeous and captivating it was. My newfound love didn't stop with petunias. Once I started looking, I began noticing all kinds of cool plants with dark, rich foliage and blooms. While some were really more like black wannabes, falling into the purple or brown section of the color wheel, I was still impressed with the selection. Take a look at some of my favorites, but be sure to do a little exploring on your own as well. After all, I hear every garden looks good in black.

1 Zwartkop aeonium

(*Aeonium arboreum*, Zones 9 to 11)

It's hard to find a more dramatic and impressive black plant than this black rose aeonium. This succulent does best in at least a half day of full sun. If grown in more shade, the rosettes are reddish-purple with a green center. It grows up to 12 inches tall and tolerates drought and poor soil. If you live out of Zone 9 to 11 (and let's face it, you probably do), then overwinter it indoors!

Why we love it: Though it looks stunning with some bright-yellow petunias or pansies, we think it makes a statement all on its own.

2 Midnight Ruffles hellebore

(*Helleborus*, Zones 4-9)

This double-bloom hellebore actually has three times as many petals as a single-bloom hellebore. Combine that with its amazing velvety flowers, and it's easy to see why this plant has the horticulture world talking. It grows nearly 24 inches tall and wide, and is ideal for shade.

Why we love it: It's an early bloomer! Hellebores start flowering in late winter and continue for several weeks. In fact, it's also known as Lenten rose, because some varieties bloom during Lent.

3 Tropicanna Black canna

(*Canna*, Zones 7 to 11)

Boasting bright scarlet blooms, the Tropicanna Black series offers a refreshing alternative for cannas. You'll need to plant the rhizomes every spring. Then sit back and watch the magic as they grow up to 6 feet tall. The plants do best with at least six hours of sun, but will tolerate some shade.

Why we love it: It's one of the easiest ways to bring the flair of the tropics to your backyard.

4 Black Velvet petunia

(*Petunia x hybrid*, annual)

Are you ready for the world's first black petunia? Here it is! Ball Horticulture Co. introduced Black Velvet a few years ago. A perfect fit for containers, it thrives in sunny areas.

Why we love it: Containers just got more interesting, thanks to the richness of this plant. Pair it with bright-pink blooms for a lively contrast.



Find our favorite picks for orange, green and purple blooms at birdsandblooms.com/mag.



5 Sorbet Black Delight viola

(*Viola cornuta*, annual)

Also known as horned violet, the low-maintenance, fragrant viola tolerates sun and partial shade and blooms most profusely in cool weather. Everyone should grow some violas, so why not try this bold cultivar?

Why we love it: You know how you get that itch to garden even before the chance of frost has passed? Grow this—it's forgiving.



6 Black Coral elephant ear

(*Colocasia esculenta*, Zones 7-10)

Elephant ear is a plant that already commands attention with its giant leaves. This black-leaved variety is even more striking, growing nearly 4 feet tall with leaves 3 feet or more across! Even if you live in a colder zone, you can enjoy this beauty year after year. Just dig it up and keep it in a cool place over winter.

Why we love it: It's one of the most distinctive plants for containers, but you're going to need a big one! Plant it as the centerpiece and accent with bright plants around it.

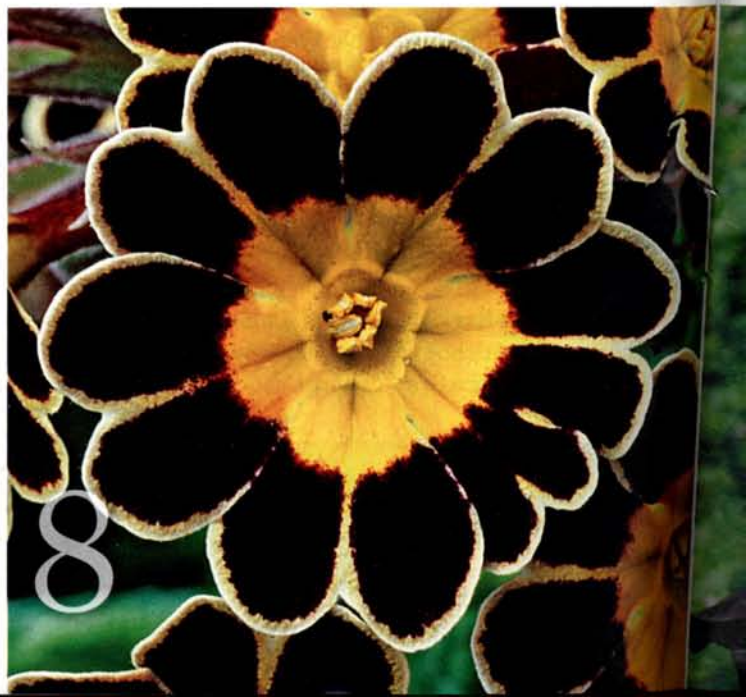


7 Black Prince coleus

(*Coleus solenostemon*, annual)

You'll have plenty of versatility with this tough coleus—it does well in sun or shade and is perfect for container combinations, hanging baskets or garden beds. (You can even grow it as a houseplant.) It grows to about 30 inches tall and will attract hummingbirds with its late-season flowers.

Why we love it: It's very forgiving if you sometimes forget to water it. If you see it start to droop, just add water and it'll perk right up.



8 Victoriana Silver Lace Black primrose

(*Primula elatior*, Zones 5 to 10)

As winter turns to spring, little blooms appear on these compact dark-green plants. Victoriana Silver Lace Black boasts white-edged petals and a golden-yellow center.

- The primrose does best in partial shade, but it can live in full sun if the soil around it remains moist.

Why we love it: The pattern! The standout colors remind us of a kaleidoscope.

9 Before the Storm tall bearded iris

(*Iris*, Zones 3-10)

Irises are a staple in backyard gardens, and they're available in just about every shade imaginable, including this new purplish-black variety. This one has a bit of a sweet fragrance and blooms in early summer, making it the perfect plant to provide garden color in the lull between tulips and flowering perennials. Like all tall bearded irises, it performs best in full sun.

Why we love it: It's naturally deer- and rabbit-resistant, so if you have trouble with critters eating your plants, give it a try.

10 Obsidian coral bells

(*Heuchera*, Zones 3 to 9)

While coral bells do have tiny blooms atop long shoots, many people buy them for the foliage. And why wouldn't you, with options like deep red, orange and black. This Obsidian cultivar is just one of several coral bells with black leaves.

Why we love it: You can plant coral bells in partial shade. And the tiny blooms attract hummingbirds!



Try growing this dark-hued hollyhock.

more favorites

Ten ideas not enough? Here are a few more plants to look for.

Calla lilies (Black Pearl)

Geranium (Espresso)

Hollyhock (Blacknight)

Sweet potato vine (Blackie)

Bachelor's button (Black Magic)



Stacy Tornio, the editor of *Birds & Blooms*, grew (and loved) *Black Prince* coleus last summer because it looked great all the way through fall.

