

Coleus Comes Out of the Shade

Since the mid 1990's new coleus varieties have moved this once old-fashioned plant out of the shade garden and into the sun. In fact, many of the newer varieties actually perform better in full sun. Shade types of coleus are still around though, so make sure when buying that you purchase the right plants for your garden. Most of the sun coleus are vegetatively propagated and flower less than the shade types, which are seed propagated. Mixing several foliage colors together creates an eye-catching container, in shade or sun.

Basically, there are three types of coleus- landscape, novelty and groundcovers. Landscape types are upright and range in height up to four feet. Novelty types have interesting leaf shapes or colors. Ground cover types may be either mounding or with long, trailing stems that are great for hanging baskets.

The Solar series is a great group of landscape coleus, including "Eclipse"(frilly leaves in a mixture of pink, green, purple and magenta), "Flare" (green leaves mottled with purple and yellow), "Solar Shadow" (wide, rounded leaves in green, white and purple), and "Stormy Weather" (a bright swirl of red, yellow, purple and green) to name a few. "Sedona" is another great upright, landscape coleus with glowing orange leaves. "Christmas Candy" is a large, upright, landscape coleus with large leaves in red, magenta, pink, white and green. Many of the landscape coleus reach three feet in height or larger, and are sure to bright any corner of your garden.

"Tilt A Whirl" is a novelty coleus with dark burgundy leaves that seem to swirl around the stems. It can grow 3-4 feet tall and grows well in full sun. "New Hurricane" has strongly lobed, large leaves, purple and burgundy with a bright yellow edge, that create a wild and lacy effect.

"Inky Fingers" is a mounding coleus, reaching 18-24"height, with deep purple leaves edged in green. A duckfoot variety, its leaf shape is reminiscent of a duck's foot. It forms a nice bushy plant that works well in hanging basket or a container. "Thumbellina" is an extra small coleus, with tiny duckfoot leaves in deep purple edged with green. Great in a small container or as a windowsill houseplant. "Trailing Plum Brocade" has green leaves edged with plum on long, trailing stems.

With so many great varieties to choose from, it's time to try coleus in your garden again!