



**Date:** March 2, 2009

**For Immediate Release**

**THE MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN ANNOUNCES 2009 PLANTS OF MERIT  
*Introduces New Category, Edible Ornamentals***

(ST. LOUIS): Just in time for spring, the Missouri Botanical Garden identifies **13 new “Plants of Merit™”** for the Midwest in 2009. The Plants of Merit distinction aims to build home gardeners’ confidence in selecting annuals, perennials, shrubs and vines, trees and now edible ornamentals.

Selecting good plants for the landscape can be challenging, especially when faced with numerous possibilities and limited information. The task is made even more complex when many new plants are introduced each year with which gardeners have little experience. The Plants of Merit program aims to promote diversity in the home gardening landscape.

To be nominated as a Plant of Merit, selections must not be invasive in our area; be easy to grow and maintain; grow consistently well in Missouri, central and southern Illinois, and the Kansas City Metro area; be resistant or tolerant to diseases and insects; have outstanding ornamental value; and be reasonably available to purchase.

Highlights of the 2009 Plants of Merit list include Serena series (*Angelonia angustifolia*), a great, tough annual for Missouri. Try using this brightly colored annual in beds and borders, but also in mixed combinations. Available in three colors, plus a mix, Serena series is a great height item for smaller combination pots, creating a center height element. It requires full sun exposure and is tolerant of our heat and humidity.

**(over)**

### **ADD ONE: Plants of Merit**

In the perennials category is Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*). This Missouri native has 'yucca-like' leaves with flowers that resemble thistle heads one-inch in diameter. It tolerates poor soils, and is best used in taller back borders, cottage gardens, meadows and naturalized areas. The seed heads are great in dried floral arrangements. Try using natural paints to add a little zip!

'Citation' yew (*Taxus x media*), a shrub, is not your ordinary yew. 'Citation' is a columnar type that does well even in shade. If wet conditions are avoided, this plant will thrive in average soil and tolerates urban conditions. Use as a screen hedge in lightly shaded to shade conditions.

In trees, Chinkapin oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*) adapts well to urban conditions as a lawn, shade, or street tree. Another Missouri native, the Chinkapin oak has characteristics which do not resemble the typical oak leaf. These leaves are narrow, dark and glossy, with a serrated edge instead of a lobed airy leaf. The Chinkapin oak is a rather large tree, but easily sets its branches among the larger home landscapes, parks and even cemeteries.

The Plants of Merit program has a new category in 2009: edible ornamentals. This year's pick is Ruby Perfection (*Brassica oleracea*). It's a cabbage! Ruby Perfection produces three to four pound heads of edible red cabbage in 80 days, but also doubles as a colorful garden ornamental. It may be grown in the cool temperatures of spring or fall, but not in the heat of the summer. Harvest the cabbages for use in salads, slaws or as cooked vegetables, or simply enjoy their showy color in the garden.

The Plants of Merit program began in 1999. Partnering organizations include Powell Gardens, Mizzou Botanic Garden, the University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Landscape & Nursery Association, and Illinois Green Industry Association.

For more information on Plants of Merit, visit [www.plantsofmerit.org](http://www.plantsofmerit.org). Plants of Merit brochures may also be purchased at the Missouri Botanical Garden's Kemper Center for Home Gardening and the Garden Gate Shop.

The Missouri Botanical Garden is the oldest continually operating botanical garden in the nation, celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2009. *Missouri Botanical Garden: Green for 150 Years*.

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**NOTE: A digital color image is available by request. Download media materials at [www.mobot.org/press](http://www.mobot.org/press).**

The Missouri Botanical Garden's mission is "to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment, in order to preserve and enrich life." Today, 150 years after opening, the Missouri

Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display. *Missouri Botanical Garden: Green for 150 Years.*

**The Missouri Botanical Garden is located at 4344 Shaw Blvd. in St. Louis, just south of I-44 at Vandeventer-Kingshighway (exit #287B). Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Dec. 25. Grounds open at 7 a.m. every Wednesday and Saturday. Admission is \$8; free children ages 12 and under and Garden members. St. Louis City and County residents are \$4 and free every Wednesday and Saturday until noon (exception: special admission rate events). Park for free on site and two blocks west at the Shaw-Vandeventer intersection. (Note: the Garden's main vehicle entrance at 4344 Shaw Blvd. will be under construction through Apr. 2009 for improvements. Follow signs to temporary parking lot entrances around the corners at 2019 Tower Grove Ave. and 1940 Alfred Ave.) The Garden is easily accessible by taking the MetroLink commuter rail line to the Central West End station and picking up a Metro bus ([www.metrostlouis.org](http://www.metrostlouis.org)). For general information, log on to [www.mobot.org](http://www.mobot.org) or call the 24-hour recording at (314) 577-9400 or 1-800-642-8842. For membership information, call (314) 577-5118 during weekday business hours. For volunteer opportunities, call (314)-577-5187 or visit [www.mobot.org/volunteer](http://www.mobot.org/volunteer). The Missouri Botanical Garden is a tobacco-free environment.**

**(Note: A section of the I-64/U.S. 40 highway is under construction through 2009. Before traveling, check [www.thenewi64.org](http://www.thenewi64.org) for updates or visit [www.GetAroundStL.com](http://www.GetAroundStL.com) for other helpful information.)**