

COLEUS
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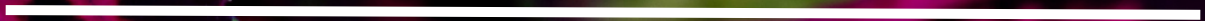


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Introduction: Tapestries of Color, Texture, and Artistry

Coleus is one of the most spectacular foliage plants in the gardener's palette. Native to warm, tropical regions throughout Africa, Asia, and Australia, Coleus has been cultivated for ornamental use since the 1800s, when Victorian gardeners first marveled at its kaleidoscopic leaves in elaborate carpet bedding displays.

What makes Coleus so remarkable is its extraordinary pigmentation. Each leaf can contain up to five or six distinct colors, arranged in patterns ranging from precise, symmetric zones to splashed, ruffled, or mosaic designs. The pigments responsible (including chlorophyll, anthocyanins, and carotenoids) shift in intensity based on light, temperature, and the individual plant's genetics.

Coleus arrived in European gardens via Dutch traders in the 1850s, quickly becoming a sensation. The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew received their first specimens in the mid-1800s, and within several years, Coleus fever had swept through the horticultural establishment. Breeding programs in Britain, the Netherlands, and later the United States produced hundreds of varieties.

The 20th Century saw Coleus fall somewhat out of fashion as annual flowers dominated the market. But a renaissance began in the 1990s with the introduction of sun-tolerant varieties and the trend toward low-maintenance foliage gardening.

Today, Coleus has firmly re-established its place as one of the top-selling bedding plants in North America. Modern breeding has expanded the Coleus repertoire far beyond anything those early horticulturists could have imagined, with 320 accepted species and around 1500 named cultivars. From compact mounding varieties ideal for window boxes, to tall, architectural selections suited to bold border plantings, Coleus now encompasses cultivars in virtually every color except true blue.

Growing Tips & Care

Light

Tolerates partial shade to full shade. Some varieties handle full sun, but avoid harsh, afternoon sun in hot climates - this may cause the leaves to scorch.

Watering

Keep soil consistently moist, and never allow the plant to dry out completely. Water at the base to prevent fungal issues on leaves.

Soil

Prefers a rich, well-draining soil. Amend with compost before planting, if needed.

Temperature

Thrives at 60-85°F, but bring indoors when temperatures drop below 50°F.

Pruning

Pinch tips regularly to promote bushiness, and remove flower spikes immediately.

Pest Control

Watch for aphids, mealybugs, and spider mites in dry conditions.

***Pro Tip:** Want to over-winter your favorites? Take 4" cuttings in late August, root in water or perlite, and pot up to over-winter on a sunny windowsill.



Classic & Modern Varieties & Species

All modern Coleus derive from *Plectranthus scutellarioides*, native to Southeast Asia. Related species are occasionally grown for culinary or medicinal purposes.

Modern Coleus breeding has produced plants for every conceivable garden scenario. Breeders have developed series optimized for sun tolerance, heat resistance, rain tolerance, compact growth, trailing habits, and more dramatic color combinations. The following represents a selection of some of the most celebrated series and varieties available today:

Colorblaze® Series

Bold, intensely-colored varieties bred specifically for sun tolerance and vigorous growth. 18 unique varieties.

- Full to part sun • 20-28" tall • Heat & drought tolerant

Kong Series

Enormous, dinner-plate-sized leaves in rich burgundy, rose, and multicolored patterns.

- Shade to part sun • 18-24" tall • Excellent heat tolerance

Wizard Series

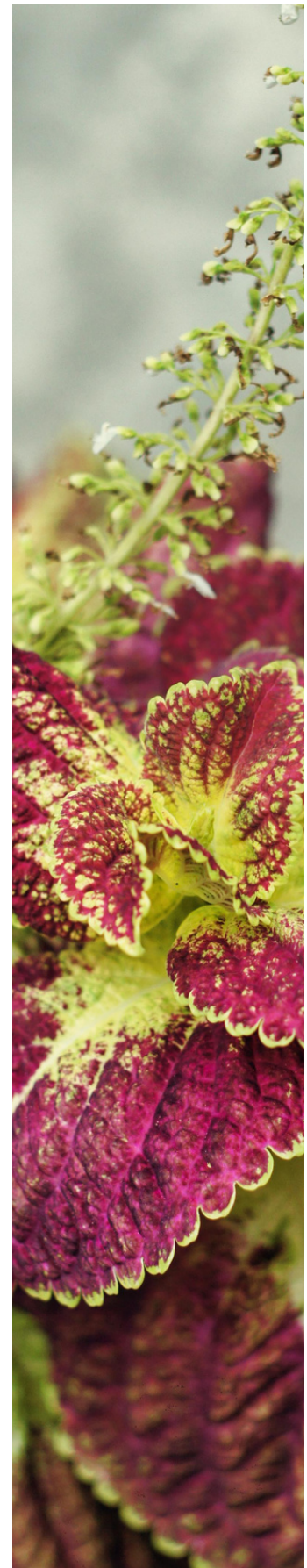
Classic, versatile, and prolific, the Wizard series produces perfectly uniform mounds in vivid colors.

- Part shade • 12-24" tall • AAS Award Winner

Stained Glassworks® Series

Ruffled leaves in swirling combinations of burgundy, lime, and chartreuse. 4 unique varieties.

- Part sun to shade • 14-18" tall • Unique texture



Series Spotlight: Main Street

The Main Street series represents one of the most significant advances in Coleus breeding over the past two decades. Developed by Dümmer Orange, it focuses on exceptional sun tolerance, vigorous growth, and outstanding color retention. Main Street varieties have earned devoted fans among professional landscapers and home gardeners alike.

Named after iconic American thoroughfares, each variety in the Main Street line is selected for its ability to perform in challenging conditions - full sun, heat, humidity, and heavy rain. Despite this, it maintains vivid, complex foliage coloration that makes Coleus so beloved.

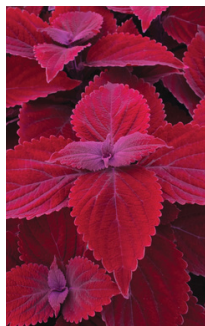
Key Performance Features:

- Outstanding sun & heat tolerance
- Rain-resistant foliage - holds color
- Compact, self-branching habit
- Excellent slug & pest resistance
- Season-long color retention

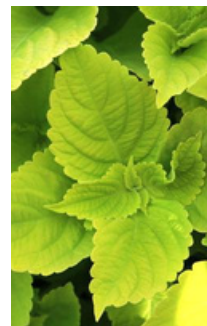
Our favorite varieties:



Fifth
Avenue



Beale
Street



Chartres
Street



Alligator
Alley



Bourbon
Street



Oxford
Street

Seasonal Planting Guide

This month-by-month calendar will keep Coleus thriving from first planting to final farewell:

Spring

March-April

Start seeds indoors 8-10 weeks before last frost. Use bottom heat for best germination. Do not cover seeds - they need light to germinate. Transplant to 2" pots when first true leaves appear.

May

Harden off transplants over 7-10 days. Plant out after last frost when nights stay above 50°F. Set 10-14" apart, depending on variety. Water well at planting and mulch lightly.

Summer

June

Pinch growing tips to encourage branching. Begin feeding program with balanced fertilizer. Watch for aphids on tender new growth. Deadhead any flower spikes promptly.

July-August

Peak growing season! Maintain consistent moisture - Coleus wilts quickly, but recovers well. Continue pinching and fertilizing every 2 weeks for containers. Enjoy the show!

Fall

September

Take cuttings of favorites before frost. Root in water or perlite. Reduce fertilizing as days shorten. Begin transitioning containers indoors if overwintering.

October

Bring all plants indoors before first frost. Place in brightest available window. Reduce watering but do not allow to dry completely. Watch for spider mites!

Winter

November-February

Overwinter cuttings or potted specimens in bright indoor light. Minimum 60°F. Water sparingly. Prune leggy growth in late January. Start planning next year's combinations.

Late February

Begin seeds under grow lights for early transplants. Review and order new varieties. Prepare beds with compost amendments.

Design Ideas

Designing with Coleus is an act of pure joy - every combination is a new work of living art. Gardens can be quickly and easily transformed with inspired combinations - from bold, tropical containers, to elegant shade borders:

Container Design Recipes

Thriller/Filler/Spiller

Pair a tall, dramatic Coleus (thriller) with spreading Impatiens (filler) and Ipomoea (spiller). The contrasting textures and complementary colors will fill a container with beautiful color that will last throughout the spring and summer seasons.

Monochromatic Drama

Choose Coleus varieties in deep burgundy and wine tones. Add white Caladium or silvery-toned foliage plants for a striking contrast against the deep-colored Coleus.

Tropical Fiesta

Combine bright chartreuse Coleus with red and orange Calibrachoa, trailing golden Lysimachia, and a central Canna. This sun-loving combination evokes a tropical vacation, right in your own backyard.

Landscape Design Ideas

Ribbon Borders

Plant single-variety Coleus in long sweeps along walkways or bed edges. Single-color Coleus, such as 'Redhead' and 'Campfire', make a stunning statement.

Shady Tapestry

Combine 5-7 varieties with contrasting colors in a free-form, naturalistic planting under trees. No formal pattern - just overlapping drifts of color.

Foliage-First Beds

Design an entire bed around Coleus without a single flower. Use different heights, textures, and colors. Add a few architectural plants, like Canna, for vertical interest.