

New Abutilons from Suncrest

Summer 2009

This month we are pleased to announce a limited release of new Abutilon hybrids, created at Suncrest by Patrick Worley. Patrick was previously noted for his work with begonias, gesneriads and passifloras (including such popular hybrids as 'Lavender Lady and 'Purple Tiger'), and he has pursued several new plant groups during his time at Suncrest.

We pursued this project with objectives in mind. First was to see how the familiar range of colors might be extended. Among the new additions are snow whites, soft and brilliant yellows, unusual oranges, "painted" orange-red combinations, some incredibly vivid pink and rose shades, and "hot" reds, some with a lacquered surface. Another object was to increase flower size in at least some of the selections, though not at the expense of flower production. You'll find some spectacular examples of success with this feature among the new group. And we had a particular interest in developing a new race of low and/or compact plants with a fuller range of colors than previously available (most past selections have offered only shades of orange and yellow). We have dubbed the entire group the Sunbelle™ series.

Limited quantities of these new hybrids will be available this summer, mostly in 5-gallon containers, with larger quantities planned for various container sizes in 2010. We hope you'll agree that the new Sunbelle™ series offers a refreshing change from the common abutilon.

'Blushing Belle'. One of the smaller abutilons, easily maintained below 5 feet, with bushy, spreading growth. Smallish medium green leaves closely line the slender stems. Classic bell-shaped flowers, about 2 inches in diameter, are paired all along the stems. Each combines a reddish calyx with soft rose and salmon shaded petals, enhanced by darker veins.

'Bold Venture'. A bushy plant, growing 6-8 feet high, with very large dark leaves. Standing out from these are nearly wide-open, "hot salmon-red" flowers, up to 3 inches in diameter. Each is shaded to a lighter center on the inner surface. The overall impression is quite dramatic.

'Bouncing Bells' is a dense, shapely plant with dark, sharply lobed leaves. Its many pendant bells are up to 2 inches broad, orange-red outside, orange with dark red veining inside.

'Butter Bells'. A profusely branched shrub of moderate growth, with dark, pointed satiny leaves. It produces a wealth of huge (to 3 inches across) wide-open moonlight yellow flowers in generous clusters.

'Buttermilk Delight' is a smaller, very bushy hybrid with small dark leaves. It carries a continuous profusion of wide-open 1½ to 2 inch blossoms as the shoot tips develop. The flowers are pale yellow overall with contrasting red-tinged calyx.

'Coral Cascade'. This is a bushy selection of medium (5-6 feet) height. It has slender stems, closely set with pointed somewhat narrow leaves. A profusion of broad bells, each measuring about 2 inches across, is carried over the plant from spring to fall. Each flower is painted a vivid "hot coral" inside and out, with darker veins.

'Cygnet'. A compact but upright plant, probably reaching 6 feet in height. It features large lustrous leaves and a myriad of broad snow-white bells, each up to 2½ inches in diameter. It is one of the few "white" abutilons with no rosy tinges.

'Glowbelle' is a strong, upright plant with slightly open growth, ultimately reaching 8 feet or more in height. It has large very dark leaves, forming a beautiful backdrop for clusters of spreading bells, each up to 3 inches across and colored an incredibly vivid red. The petals have a distinctly varnished surface.

'Green-eyed Lady'. One of the "big" abutilons, probably topping out at 8 feet or more. It is well-branched and sports large, dark, lustrous leaves. 'Lady' is a real spectacle in flower, with widely flared, bright red bells, measuring about 2½ inches across and standing out well from the foliage. The basal claws of the petals expose bright green central "eyes".

'Love in Vein'. A bushy small to medium shrub, with dark long-pointed leaves and many 1½ inch bells, displayed at the shoot tips. Flowers are colored vivid pink overall, accented by dark veining and a deep red center.

'Painted Bells'. A tall but closely branched selection with slender stems and dark rather narrow leaves. Beneath these hang many 1½ to 2 inch shiny bells. These are painted gold with red base inside, orange with rose shading and gold edges outside.

'Rosy Dewdrops' is tall and upright (possibly to 8 feet) but well branched, with broad dark leaves. Bright pink bells up to 2½ inches broad are boldly displayed at the shoot tips. The flowers are paler within and have a tracery of deep red veins inside and out.

'Twilight Waltz' is a compact selection with large dark leaves. Broad veiny coral pink flowers, measuring up to 3 inches across, stand well out from the foliage.