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 SATURDAY  
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**HOUSTON CHRONICLE**  
 ★ [chron.com/star](http://chron.com/star)

**INSIDE**

■ We say goodbye to the 2010 TV characters we'll miss the most. **PAGE E10**

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A PASSION FOR GROWING

Greg Grant is a superstar of Texas plantsmen

**A NEW PLANT'S  
 BEST FRIEND**

By **KATHY HUBER** | GARDEN WRITER

**I**T takes passion, rigorous trial and error and a lot of coddling to bring a worthy new plant to market. To make it in the trade, a plant must be showy and sell itself. It must be easy to propagate, and it must fit nursery production schedules to be sold by the thousands.

"For every one that makes it, 100 plants go down the drain," says seventh-generation Texan Greg Grant, 48, one of the state's hardest-working plantsmen.

Grant's witty, warmhearted lectures, his Texas Gardener magazine columns and garden books have inspired many a Lone Star gardener.

But perhaps his greater gift has been introducing scores of bulletproof plants, several of which were major landscape changers.

His 'Gold Star' esperanza, a flowering machine, shines in gardens everywhere. It's one of 60 plants designated Texas Superstars — many of which Grant introduced.

Grant brought 'Blue Princess' verbena to Texas from England. He found the fragrant, long-blooming 'John Fanick' phlox in a San Antonio garden and 'Lecompte' vitex in a Louisiana yard. 'VIP' petunia is from a seed from a vigorous mini-flowered petunia he found beside a pay toilet in Germany.

"I'm sort of a product of George Washington Carver, who let God show him the new products and ideas in front of him, and Luther Burbank, who dreamed them up, then made them happen. William C. Welch taught me to share plants with others, and Jerry Parsons got me hooked on introducing them to the nursery trade," he said.

Grant lives in his great-grandparents' restored dogtrot cottage in Arcadia with no Internet or

*Please see **PLANTS**, Page E5*

**'JOHN FANICK'**

**PHLOX:** Greg Grant found the hardy, light pink garden phlox in a San Antonio garden and named it for his friend, beloved San Antonio nurseryman John Fanick.



By **KATHY HUBER**

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By **KATHY HU**  
 GARDEN WRIT

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## 'JOHN FANICK' PHLOX

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By KATHY HUBER  
GARDEN WRITER

**T**HERE are many garden catalogs with stunning descriptions of

All-American represent the best of scores of trial plants tested across the country. AAS plants are typically safe and rewarding choices. Long-popular 'Celebrity' tomato is one example.

AAS judges scrutinize flowers for novel forms, colors, fragrance, length of flowering season and pest resistance. Vegetables also must meet the highest standards. They're evaluated for early harvest, total yield, taste and pest resistance.

Ask your nurserymen when 2011 winners will be available, or see seed sources at all-america selections.org. Two new flowers are especially tempting to me:

'Arizona Apricot' gailardia is a foot-tall perennial with 3- to 3½-inch daisy-like blooms with yellow edges that deepen to a rich apricot in the center. It flowers about 105 days after sowing seed and blooms summer into fall. It's touted as relatively old flowers to

'Summer prior ratings fall to early and to fall. The plant tall, and the

# PLANTS: Looking for long-lasting species

■ Mosses: spreading club moss, peacock moss

■ Small ornamental grasses: sedge, papyrus, fiber-optic grass

■ Peperomias (sold in many supermarkets): emerald ripple, cyperus peperomia, felted peperomia

■ Begonias: rhizomatous begonia (the best for terrariums) 'Baby Perfection' or 'Bethlehem Star'; Rex begonia 'Dew Drop' or 'Wood Nymph'

■ Gesneriads (members of the African violet family): flame violets, African violet, cape primrose



GREG GRANT PHOTOS

'PAM PURYEAR' TURK'S CAP

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE E1**  
TV. He gets his entertainment from his sugar cane patch, a forest full of rare trilliums and 100 bluebird houses.

He's loved plants, insects and anything to do with nature almost since he was born. He was gardening before first grade. In the fourth grade, he read about Carver and decided he, too, wanted to teach and practice horticulture.

"As a boy in East Texas, I should have been out clubbing frogs," Grant



'PEPPERMINT FLARE' HIBISCUS

says. "There were no other children gardeners around."

After he graduated from Texas A&M, his career took him to the Texas extension service, Lone Star Growers and San Antonio and Mercer botanical gardens. He's now a part-time research assistant for garden outreach at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches.

Grant tired of unsuitable, "throwaway" plants from Northern breeders pretty early on and went

looking for better options — plants that grow without IV hookups in Southern gardens. Success, he knows, encourages gardeners.

With his nose to the ground, Grant has found worthy new plants created through open pollination of bees and butterflies. He's developed some from controlled crosses, as he did with 'Big Momma' and 'Pam Puryear' turk's cap. And he's discovered sports (new plants created spontaneously on old ones), such as 'Marie Daly' rose and 'Buttercream' lantana. 'Laura Bush' petunia was a spontaneous cross in his trials between 'VIP' and old-fashioned petunias from Welch.

"Greg is the greatest Texas plantsman of commercially important plants identified during the past 30 years," says Parsons, who helped initiate the Superstar program.

And there are more on the way. Three new Grant plants are now in production.

An extensive revision of *The Southern Heirloom Garden*, co-authored with Welch in 1995, is due out this spring.

Meanwhile, a Kindle-only collection of Grant's magazine columns, *In Greg's Garden: A Pineywoods Perspective on Gardening, Nature and Family*, is available at amazon.com for \$5.95.

Just don't ask him to read from it: He doesn't own the high-tech device.

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a bird field guide such as the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. Don't just flip through it to glance at the pictures. Read the text, study the range maps and read the introductory material, which usually offers a primer for birders.

To contact Lone Star College Vice President Gary Clark or photographer Kathy Adams Clark, visit their website at [www.texasbirder.net](http://www.texasbirder.net).

breeding and raising young

**Learn bird songs**  
■ **Learn:** the "vocabulary" of birds. For example, mockingbirds and jays have distinctive voices just like a child or spouse.

■ **Master:** the names of birds you see often

■ **Purchase:** recordings of bird songs

## NEW: A fresh list of award-winning

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE E1**  
the seed. This warm-season annual flowers 50 days after sowing.

Ball Horticultural Co., the company behind Wave petunias and Simply Beautiful plants, has added new zinnias to its Zahara series. I've been impressed with the months of blooms and

disease resistance of the Zahara cultivar tested.

This year I'd like Double Zahara 'Tangerine' 20-inch plants, a Zahara 'Cherry,' magenta flower variety with centers in low light and high night temperature.

Ball's 'PowWow Berry' echinacea is a profusion of 3- to 24-inch plants with good drainage and when dry. A new winner, this perennial All-America Selections winner.

The spring proven winners 'Golddust' meca 3-inch-tall dense mound of teeny flowers and foliage has been a fun surprise. My three potted plants have not died in months. Sun, good water and their only needs. My lover came through light frosts, and hardy to 25 degrees. your nurseryman expects plants late in the season. it's available at provenwinners.com.

A perfect color for 'Golddust' is the orb Blaze 'Alligator' coleus, a bright yellow foliage plant with good branching tolerance. Sun tolerant and good drainage. this a 20- to 30-inch splash of color. required less pinches than other varieties to bushy shape.

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ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS

'SUMMER JEWEL RED' SALVIA



BALL HORTICULTURAL CO.

DOUBLE ZAHARA 'FIRE' ZINNIA



COURTESY OF CLARKSON POTTER  
The cones and other natural objects in this one is from the book *The Terrarium*.

DOUBLE ZAHARA 'FIRE' ZINNIA