

# Overflowing Petunias for Containers

(Appeared in the Winter 2007-08 issue of *Montana Gardens*)

By Norm DeNeal with help from Carmella Gross of the Petunia Factory in Butte

No flower can compare with petunias in a container. Petunias give more color for a longer period for the least cost than any other flower. But the petunias that you might have had only five years ago are not the same as the exceptional hybrids that are available today. For the most dramatic container display, petunias that flow over a container and down the sides are the most stunning. Two plants for about \$12.00 in a 12-16 inch diameter circular container would be all that one would need.

Most gardeners are familiar with a class of petunias called “Waves”. Yet not all “Waves” make for an overflowing flower effect. “Tidal waves” are an example; they grow up and out but do not trail well over the sides of containers. Instead, choose “Easy waves”, or “Supertunias” in varieties of Bordeaux, Giant Pink, Lavendar Pink, Raspberry Blast, Red, Royal Magenta, Royal Velvet, and White. There is also a “Supertunia Mini with smaller blossoms that are available in even more colors and these all trail extensively. There are also “Vistas” (a new variety of “Supertunia”), and “Supercascadias”. The most dramatic variety is the “Vistas” that grow 3-4 feet across. Only last year did the fabulous “Vistas” become available to the public. They come in two colors: “Bubblegum”, or Fuchsia which is a rose pink. They too flow several feet over a container. Furthermore, all of the above recommended varieties need low maintenance (self cleaning) other than watering and fertilizing.

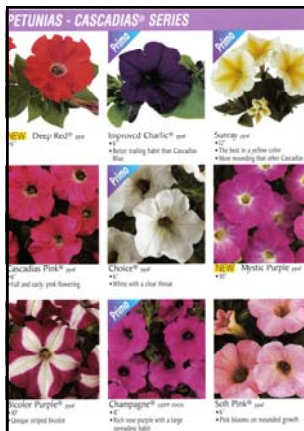
And remember not to use regular garden soil in a container. It is too heavy. Instead use light potting or moisture retaining soil. Ideally, fertilize every watering day with a diluted water soluble fertilizer when you water. Miracle-Gro is what most people use, and it is acceptable because it is safe. Instead, many professional greenhouses use other brands of water soluble fertilizers such as Masterblend. A professional greenhouse may often sell you a household amount of a professional fertilizer. Unless you really know your plants, avoid purchasing your container petunias at a box store since both the plants are not clearly identifiable and the help is clueless. You may or may not pay more for a plant from a professional nursery person, but the superior quality of the plant and the available expertise makes it well worth any small added expense.



(Left) An example of two “Supertunia” plants in a 16” container



(Above) A wall of the Supertunia “Bubblegum” that proved to be the most spectacular in Butte’s 183 hanging street baskets.



(Left) Petunias come in a wide variety of colors. Here are some of the “Cascadia” series. Avoid yellows since they are not prolific bloomers.

(Right) Some of the “Supertunia” color series. Look for varieties that are listed as “mounding” **and** “spreading”, not just mounding since those will not overflow a container or border.

