



New Plant Product Combinations for Container Production

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Nature of Work: Nursery crops are sold as impulse items identified by their color (ie. flowers, leaves or bark) or for their unique growth habit or form (contorted or weeping types). Other plants are purchased for a specific use or need. No where in the nursery trade do we offer a combination or single package of plants to serve multiple used or act as a design element in the landscape. The objective of this study is to produce plant combinations in the same container and determine customer acceptance.

Seven gallon pots were planted with several different plant combinations. Containers were planted that combine an upright tree element and a lower ground cover running over the pot surface. Listed below are these combinations.

Natchez Crapemyrtle with New Gold Lantana
Sioux Crapemyrtle with Rose Creek Abelia
Peppermint Lace Crapemyrtle with Rose Creek Abelia
Little Gem Magnolia with Variegated Liriope
Mary Nell Holly with Lemon Drop Carolina Jessamine
Zhuzhou Loropetalum with Stella d'Oro Daylily

Other combinations included plants of similar growth habit that could grow together with intermingled branches, flowers, leaves and fruit. Listed below are these combinations.

Sizzling Pink Loropetalum with Edward Goucher Abelia (Common Name - Lora Belia)
Pink Snow Sasanqua Camellia with Variegated Aucuba
Japanese Clecyra with Otto Luyken Laurel
Sweet Osmanthus with Beautyberry
Japanese Anise with Edward Goucher Abelia

Five pots of each combination were potted in mid April 2002 and maintained under nursery conditions. All were in full sun except the Sasanqua and Aucuba plantings.

Results and Discussion: Plants have been growing together for one season. A reasonable amount of growth has been produced. All the Tree/Ground Cover combinations look reasonable. The New Gold Lantana is very effective in setting off the taller plants. The Little Gem Magnolia looks good with the Variegated Liriope. The Rose Creek Abelia under Crapemyrtles looks a little large. The Carolina Jessamine has climbed the interior of the Mary Nell Holly and filled all the open areas. The yellow

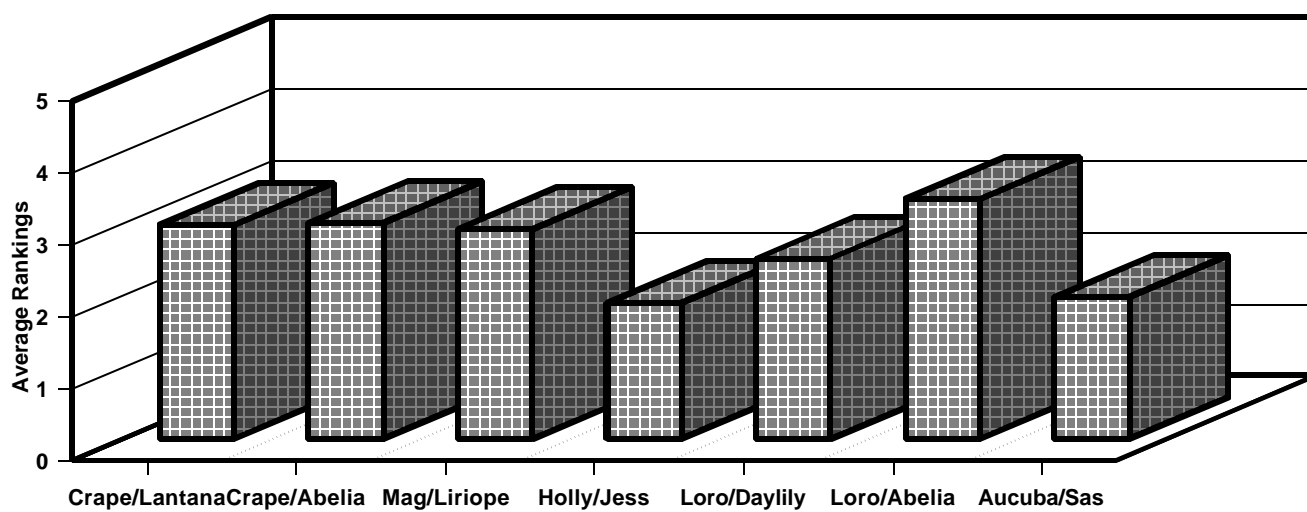
flowers in spring could add a splash of color to the holly. The Stella Daylily flowers were striking against the purple foliage of the Sizzling Pink Loropetalum. Over all the Tree/Ground Cover combination look good and should be feasible.

The Mixed Shrub combinations were less successful. The Japanese Cleyera / OttoLuyken Laurel combination has nothing to distinguish it. The Beautyberry / Sweet Osmanthus was overgrown by the Beautyberry with little growth from the Osmanthus. The Edward Goucher Abelia with the Japanese Anise lacks punch. There is good contrast between the Variegated Aucuba / Sasanqua. We are waiting to see if we have some fall blooms to really set it off. The best combination is the Loropetalum / Abelia. There is a nice contrast of foliage and there should be extra color with the flowers of both the Loropetalum and Abelia. Pruning on the Abelia was required to keep the plants in balance. Overall, these initial trails have shown that plant combinations are possible.

The participants of the CANR Open House were given the opportunity to evaluate seven of the combinations. A ranking of 1=Not Acceptable, 2=Marginally Acceptable, 3=Acceptable, 4=Good and 5=Outstanding were used on the evaluation. Thirty of the participants returned their evaluation forms. The average rankings are shown in Figure 1. Ranked as acceptable or nearly acceptable were the Crapemyrtle/Lantana, Crapemyrtle/Abelia, Magnolia/Liriope and Loropetalum/Abelia. The Loropetalum/Daylily combination was marginally acceptable. The Holly/Jessamine and Aucuba/Sasanqua were unacceptable.

Significance to the Industry: We are always looking for new ways to market our plants. I think there is an opportunity for the smaller speciality grower to expand his palette of offerings by growing combination plantings. Combination plantings are not for everyone but they can provide new ideas some growers.

Figure 1. Evaluations of Combination Plantings by CANR Open House Participants.



Rankings: 1=Not Acceptable, 2=marginally Acceptable, 3=Acceptable, 4=Good and 5= Outstanding