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Plant a smile this Mother's Day

By [Kathy Van Mullekom](#) | 247-4781

10:01 PM EDT, May 6, 2009

Flowers always make your mother smile, so this [Mother's Day](#) consider a plant that makes her smile for weeks and months to come. All of these plants can be purchased for \$4 to \$40, depending on the plant's size, at garden centers locally.

SHOW STOPPER. Crimson-red, velvet bell-shaped blooms literally cover this year's best vine — Sun Parasol Crimson Mandevilla. The vine is perfect for places where it can climb, climb and climb because it easily grows 12-15 feet. Grow the tropical treat on a trellis to create a natural privacy screen, plant it at the bottom of a mailbox for roadside drama or place it in a hanging basket for front-porch pizzazz. Feed the plant every two to three weeks with a water-soluble fertilize, mixing it according to directions on the label.

BIG BLOOMER. New this year, Endless Summer Twist-n-Shout is a lacecap hydrangea that blooms, blooms and blooms some more. Blossom color varies depending on your soil type. Alkaline soils, (pH 6-7) produce party-pleasing, lipstick pink blooms. More acidic soil, (pH 5-5.8) turns fertile (smaller) blossoms an intriguing periwinkle hue, while sterile blossoms (larger) keep their rich pink color. The hydrangea's glossy green leaves and strong, red stems add to the drama. Fall leaf color is a stunning red-burgundy, making the plant a three-season star.

PEOPLE PLEASER. Everyone has room for a Phalaenopsis mini-orchid — on a bedside table, on the kitchen counter or on the bathroom vanity. Each orchid comes in a ready-to-give decorative three- or six-inch pot with a gift tag. The 12-inch-tall plants come with eight to 10 blooms.

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AWESOME AMBER. The latest in the Flower Carpet family is Amber — the first fragrant one. It, too, has the same compact growth habit and prolific flowering personality as earlier Flower Carpet Roses, but with improved disease resistance. Amber's red-tinged, semi-double, fragrant blooms are peachy-orange with a yellow center, gradually fading to a soft seashell-pink. The growth habit is vigorous and arching with dense foliage. It grows 2 feet tall by 3 feet wide, making it a good low-maintenance ground cover.

SUNNY SENSATION. Slightly larger than previous Knock Out roses, Sunny Knock Out is similar in its disease resistance and dark green foliage. It has single, fragrant flowers that open bright yellow and fade to a light creamy color. In full bloom, the contrast between flowers and foliage delivers a stunning show. This hardy deciduous shrub has an

upright habit and will grow four to five feet tall and three to four feet wide.

CAREFREE WINNER. The flower power of Carefree Spirit, the '09 All-American Rose Selections winner, is eye-catching — white twinkles on cherry red blossoms that finish pink as they bask in the sun. The 2-inch, five-petal flowers cover a vigorous shrub that grows 5 feet tall and wide. Plant the rose among perennials or as a deciduous summer-flowering border.

EASY DOES IT. Guaranteed for two years, instead of the traditional one-year warranty that comes with most plants, Kashmir is a new Easy Elegance shrub rose. Its color first appears as dark-red buds with cashmere-soft petals that open to 3-inch-wide flowers with 50 petals. The plant grows up to 4 feet tall. Like all roses, grow it in a large container or in the ground.

ROARIN' GOOD. Tiger Eye rudbeckia is an annual that keeps flowering and flowering — until Jack Frost says it's time to go. This showstopper yields large golden-yellow flowers with a dark brown center on a plant that gets 24 inches tall in the garden. Oh, how butterflies and bees will adore it. It works best in full sun and in patio pots or in the garden. Be a little selfish and take a few cut flowers inside, too.

SUN WORSHIPPERS. Suitable for the full sun, hot garden, SunPatiens are impatiens-lookalikes that need minimum water and protection from the heat. They grow 18-24 inches tall and come in a range of colors, including three new hues: magenta, variegated white and rose coral. Group them in masses or drifts of same colors for the best visual impact.

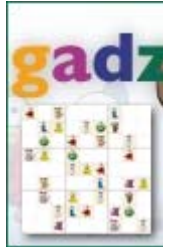
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