



Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell swept both the judges' ballots and the People's Choice voting in the New Varieties Showcase.

Judges awarded Cleopatra Flame Violet an Award of Merit.

Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell sweeps New Varieties Showcase honors

Professional judges and show attendees agreed on the best plant in the New Varieties Showcase at the 2024 Farwest Show: Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus* 'RNI-Rixed' PP35353).

The reblooming tree, with a spiral of petite star-shaped flowers, each with a shimmering, almost metallic effect, was discovered in a group of seedlings by Chris and Josh Robinson at **Robinson Nursery Inc.** in Amity, Oregon. After observing it for years, the two brothers decided it was a winner. They turned to **Spring Meadow Nursery** in Grand Haven, Michigan, to introduce the plant to the marketplace.

"I had no idea *Styrax* could look like that," Chris Robinson said. "It looks like a spiral staircase going up."

The tree is being propagated from tissue culture in the lab at Knight Hollow Nursery Inc. in Middleton, Wisconsin. It is available as bareroot and container-grown liner trees from Farwest exhibitors Proven Winners, Robinson Nursery, and **Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery**.

The introduction of Starway to Heaven marks the completion of the dream for the two Robinson brothers, who grew up on the nursery their parents, Rick and Roxanne, founded. "When we were kids, it was our dream to have an introduction that was successful, or different enough to attract attention," Josh said.

Starway to Heaven was one of 25 outstanding new selections on display at the 2024 Farwest Show and available from at least one show exhibitor.

"The quality of plants in this year's showcase was once again high," OAN Event Coordinator Jamie Moore said. "Our judges were impressed with the variety and dazzling looks. New introductions keep the industry moving forward. They deliver new options for landscapers and homeowners to dress up landscapes and bring more functionality and pizzazz."

It is somewhat rare for one plant to win Best in Show from both judges and voters, but it happened two years ago and it was another snowbell. Nightfall Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus* 'JFS 6SJ') from

J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co. won both people's and judges choice in 2022.

In the voting by professional judges, the following three plants won Awards of Merit:

Cleopatra Flame Violet (*Episcia cupreata* 'Cleopatra'), introduced by **Cascade Tropicals** of Snohomish, Washington. This easy-care houseplant offers a showy combination of pink, white and green satin foliage. It reaches 12 inches wide by 10 inches tall. Outside it would be hardy to zones 10–12. The plant is available in 2-inch, 4-inch and 6-inch containers from Cascade.

Lime Zest™ Japanese Forest Grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'HakBri2' PPAF), introduced by **Briggs Nursery** of Elma, Washington. Lime Zest features eye catching lime colored foliage with white to cream variegation along with plum-colored shoots. It adds texture and movement to a landscape and accompanies well with dark leaved shrubs. Lime Zest is a great new addition to complement its predecessor *Hakonechloa macra* 'HakBri1' Lemon Zest. It looks great when planted





Lime Zest™ Japanese Forest Grass

alone or in mass plantings and brightens up those lower light areas. It reaches 12–14 inches tall by 18–24 inches wide and is hardy to zones 5–8. The plant is available as liners and containers from Briggs.

Paisley Pup™ Doghobble (*Leucothoe fontansiana* ‘Smnlfgvr’ PPAF), hybridized by Proven Winners and introduced by **Walla Walla Nursery Co.** of Walla Walla, Washington. This broadleaf evergreen is native to North America and is filled with eye-catching variegated foliage in shades of pink, green, cream, and bronze. Tiny bell-shaped blooms are strung along arching branches, feeding pollinators in the late springtime. Shade-tolerant, deer-resistant, and low-growing. Hardy to zones 5–8. The plant is available as 2-gallon containers from Walla Walla.

And in the People’s Choice voting by show attendees, the following won Awards of Merit:

SUMMERIFIC® Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus hybrid* ‘Cookies and Cream’ PPAF CPBRAf), hybridized by Proven Winners and introduced by Walla Walla Nursery Inc. It offers a night and day combination of matte black foliage and pure white flowers. Like other dark-leaved hardy *Hibiscus*, full sun is necessary to bring out the deepest foliage color. Compared with older varieties of herbaceous *Hibiscus*, ‘Cookies and Cream’ is exceptionally compact and sturdy. Despite the smaller habit size, this selection does not lack for flowers. Blooms will appear the length of the stem, for top to bottom flower coverage, causing ‘Cookies and Cream’ to bloom both earlier and longer than traditional varieties. Hardy to zones



Paisley Pup™ Doghobble

4–9. Available as 2-gallon containers from Walla Walla Nursery Co.

Hearts A’fire® Redbud (*Cercis canadensis* ‘JN100’ PPAF). Seedling discovered by Cindy and Ray Jackson in Tennessee and introduced by Garden Debut/Greenleaf Nursery Co. A unique small tree that bursts into color in spring with dark pink flowers and heart-shaped leaves that are multiple colors of burgundy-red, tangerine and gold. Leaves turn reddish-green in summer. It reaches a mature height of 10–15 feet and spread of 10–15 feet. Available as bare-root liners and 5-gallon containers from Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery (Boring, Oregon), Heritage Seedlings and Liners (Salem, Oregon), and Bountiful Farms (Woodburn, Oregon).

Skyward™ Lilac Long-Leaf Speedwell (*Veronica longifolia* ‘Balskywac’).

Introduced and hybridized by Darwin Perennials. Veronica Skyward Lilac boasts dramatic lilac-colored spikes on a dense, naturally compact habit with sturdy stems. It has a high flower count and continuous blooming which makes it an excellent pollinator plant. It is also powdery mildew resistant. It reaches a mature height of 14–18 inches and spread of 14–17 inches. Available as unrooted cuttings and liners from Ball Seed. ©



SUMMERIFIC® Rose Mallow



Hearts A’fire® Redbud



Skyward™ Lilac Long-Leaf Speedwell