

Gomphrena sp. 'Fireworks'



An explosive annual that celebrates Texas extremes

Jimmy Turner



At a glance

Latin name: *Gomphrena* sp. 'Fireworks'

Common name: Globe amaranth

Flowers: 2-in. clusters of vivid pink with yellow "sparklers"

Mature size: 3-4 ft. tall and wide

Spacing: 24 in.

Hardiness: Summer annual

Soil: Not picky

Exposure: Full sun

Water usage: Low

Sources: Local retail or as seed from Burpee.com

Each stem of 'Fireworks' gomphrena is topped with a cluster of vivid, bright pink flowers tipped with gold sparklers.

If you want an easy-to-grow plant guaranteed to impress your neighbors with your green thumb, then I have a new plant for you. *Gomphrena* 'Fireworks' rocked our trial garden with its explosion of screaming fuchsia pink flowers on 4-foot-tall plants that flowered from early summer until first frost.

You may have grown gomphrena in the past, but this is a brand new species that is more vigorous than any other

bright pink flowers tipped with burning gold sparklers. As an added bonus, butterflies flock to these blazing blooms. I really enjoy how the slightest breeze sends the flowers of this plant dancing about. But don't worry — this isn't a frail plant. 'Fireworks' can handle all the extremes a Texas summer can throw at it — gale force winds, torrential floods, and burning sun — without needing to be staked or pruned.

Like all gomphrenas, this new variety is extremely drought-tolerant and pest-free as long as it is grown in full sun and soil that doesn't become waterlogged. I recommend spacing plants at 18 to 24 inches so they will quickly fill in. If, for some reason, your 'Fireworks' gives you too much "ka-bloom" and you have more than you know what to do with, you can bring them inside as cut flowers. They last for weeks in water, and they also make long-lasting dried flowers.

'Fireworks' is a plant for the summer, and you'll want to lay plans to include it next year. Like the Ugly Duckling, it doesn't look good when small. It really comes into its true beauty when it reaches full size.



'Fireworks' has an architectural quality, with sturdy upright wands of flowers reaching 4 feet tall.

variety I've tested. 'Fireworks' absolutely sparkled in the Dallas Arboretum Trial Gardens the first year we tested it, winning our coveted FlameProof and Best New Introduction awards. 'Fireworks' is an architectural annual with upright wands of flowers that reach up to 4 feet tall on spreading plants. Each delicate stem is topped with a 2-inch cluster of vivid,

Most likely you will find it sold locally in quart-size to 1-gallon containers, or you can purchase seed from online suppliers such as Burpee's.

I can always tell how a plant ranks for me when I start obsessing over what combinations I can make with it. Adding some 'Fireworks' to the garden has been an obsession of mine since I first saw this

plant. 'Fireworks' works well in large containers or planted *en masse* as a bedding plant. Some of my favorite pairings are with bold-textured, bright yellow or chartreuse flowers or foliage to echo the golden sparklers and contrast with the vivid pink flowers. The chartreuse foliage, bold texture and super vigorous *Ipomoea* 'Margarite' (ornamental sweet potato vine) is a natural partner – one that's also easy to grow. If you want something taller, try 'Electric Lime' sun coleus. If you'd prefer a flowering plant, then try *Rudbeckia* 'Denver Daisy' or the perennial *Rudbeckia fulgida* 'Goldsturm'. If you want a less bold combination, then use the dark burgundy *Ipomoea* 'Blackie' or the deep maroon foliage of purple fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Rubrum'). If you really want to kick it up a notch, try mixing it with the new variegated purple fountain grass also named 'Fireworks' (*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Fireworks'). For those of you with more subtle tastes, try cooling the 'Fireworks' down with the deep blue flowers of *Salvia farinacea* 'Henry Duelberg' or 'Mystic Spires Blue'. To tame the heat, you can use the icy white flowers of *Euphorbia* 'Diamond Frost' or the creamy spikes of *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln'.

It is no secret to anyone who knows me that I have a predilection for vigorous plants. 'Fireworks' gomphrena is my new favorite. Economical, easy-growing, beautiful, and tough — this is one brand of fireworks with which I'll continue to celebrate! ★

About the author: Jimmy Turner is senior director of gardens at the Dallas Arboretum and a contributing editor to this publication. Visit www.dallasplanttrials.org for more information on his trials.

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