Ageratum is the backbone of summer annual plantings in most other areas of the country. Unfortunately, this plant usually performs poorly in Texas. Still, every spring, I found myself tempted by those incredible blue flowers at my local nursery, only to be disappointed when they perished at the first sign of our inevitable warm summer weather.

Then I tried the 'Artist' series of ageratum from Proven Winners. The first year I tried these plants, I was sure there was some mistake. Ageratum should not be in perfect bloom during a hot summer August day, especially in Texas! And they kept producing flowers right up until the first frost.

I repeated the trial again last year, daring these plants to stand up to summertime again. Just as before, 'Artist' ageratum flowered constantly from March through early October.

'Artist' plants form compact mounds of bright-green foliage constantly topped with clusters of blooms in pure blue ('Artist Blue') and rose-purple ('Artist Purple'). This year, two new colors have been added to the series ('Artist Rose' and 'Artist Blue-Violet'), but I have not tested these yet.

Plants eventually reach 10 inches tall and spread to 12 inches. Our trials at the Dallas Arboretum were performed in full sun with well-drained soil. These ageratums are exceptionally drought-tolerant. Plants can suffer severe wilting, but spring back to life overnight with a good watering. These plants mix perfectly into summer annual plantings, and the compact growth habit makes them naturals for containers.

The 'Artist' series is clonally propagated by cuttings, unlike other ageratums, which are commercially grown from seed. Because of this, expect to pay a slightly higher price, but these plants are worth it!

I have been so impressed with the 'Artist' series that I've added them to our yearly summer color displays at the Dallas Arboretum. *

**About the author:** Jimmy Turner is a monthly contributor to this magazine, as well as Neil Sperry's e-gardens newsletter. He is Director of Horticulture Research at the Dallas Arboretum, where he oversees the trial gardens and is responsible for all color installations.

---

**At a glance**

**Latin name:** *Ageratum* hybrid

**Common name:** ageratum or flossflower

**Flowers:** Pure blue or rose-purple

**Foliage:** Bright-green foliage forms perfect mounds

**Mature height:** 10-12 inches

**Hardiness:** Summer annual, excellent heat-tolerance

**Soil:** Not particular as long as well-drained

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Water usage:** Weekly watering during hot weather

**Sources:** Local retailers; see [www.provenwinners.com](http://www.provenwinners.com) for more information.