



OREGON  
ASSOCIATION OF  
NURSERIES™

FARWEST  
PORTLAND 2024

### **Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell wins People's Choice balloting at Farwest Show New Varieties Showcase**

Portland, Oregon (August 23, 2024) — Nursery industry professionals attending the 2024 Farwest Show chose **Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus* 'RNI-Rixed' PP35353)** as their favorite new plant in the New Varieties Showcase. That made it a clean sweep for the new tree, which also won the NVS Judges Choice' Best in Show award earlier in the week.

The reblooming tree, with foliage that emerges red and turns a deep green, was discovered by Chris and Josh Robinson at Robinson Nursery in Amity, Oregon from amongst a group of trees grown from seed. They noticed immediately it looked different from other snowbells, with petite, five-petaled flowers that resemble a galaxy of stars. Each flower has a shimmering, almost metallic effect that sparkles in the landscape.

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

The Robinsons watched the seedling grow for several years before deciding to introduce it into the marketplace. They turned to Spring Meadow Nursery in Grand Haven, Michigan to introduce and market the plant. It's 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 (Booth #8055), Robinson Nursery (Booth #19028), and Ekstrom & Schmidt Nursery (Booth #15055).

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. "People love to see the next dazzling plants that are going to shake up the marketplace and beautify landscapes."

Three other plants won Awards of Merit according to the final voting tally:

- **SUMMERIFIC® Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus hybrid* ‘Cookies and Cream’ PPAF CPBRAFF).** Hybridized by Proven Winners and introduced by Proven Winners. 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 4–9. Available as 2-gallon containers from Walla Walla Nursery Co. (Booth #7034).
- **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 bareroot liners and 5-gallon containers from Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery (Booth #17056), Heritage Seedlings (Booth #15037), Bountiful Farms (Booth #16037).
- **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 (Booth #15025).

Earlier in the week, judges chose Starway to Heaven™ Japanese Snowbell (*Styrax japonicus* ‘RNI-Rixred’ PP35353) as their top pick. Three awards of merit were also chosen — Cleopatra Flame Violet (*Episcia cupreata* ‘Cleopatra’), Lime Zest™ Japanese Forest Grass (*Hakonechloa macra* ‘HakBri2’ PPAF) and Paisley Pup™ Doghobble (*Leucothoe fontansiana* ‘Smnlgrv’ PPAF).

All of the New Varieties Showcase selections are also viewable at <https://farwestshow.com/new-varieties-showcase/>.

For further questions, contact Jamie Moore, OAN events and education coordinator, at [JMoore@OAN.org](mailto:JMoore@OAN.org) or 503-582-2010.

#### NEW VARIETES SHOWCASE WINNERS — PHOTOS

- [Starway to Heaven Snowbell](#) | [second photo](#)
- [SUMMERIFIC® Rose Mallow](#)
- [Hearts A’fire® Redbud](#)
- [Skyward Lilac Long-Leaf Speedwell](#)

#### DOWNLOADABLE ASSETS:

- [Farwest Show Seminars image #1 \(from 2023\)](#)

- [Farwest Show Seminars image #2 \(from 2023\)](#)
- [Farwest Show logo 2024 – wordmark \(green\)](#)
- [Farwest Show logo 2024 – wordmark \(purple\)](#)
- [Farwest Show logo 2024 – Oregon state outline](#)

#### 2024 FARWEST SHOW RELEASES AND ASSETS

- [Farwest Show press room](#)

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The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN), based in Wilsonville, Oregon, represents more than 700 wholesale growers, retailers, landscapers, and suppliers. Oregon’s ornamental horticulture industry is the state’s largest agricultural commodity, with annual sales of \$1.2 billion in the most recent year tallied (2022). Oregon’s nursery industry is a traded sector; more than 75% of the nursery plants grown in Oregon are shipped out of state. For information, visit [OAN.org](http://OAN.org) or call 503-682-5089.

The Farwest Show, the biggest green industry trade show in the West, is produced by the OAN, a nonprofit organization that represents and serves the interests of Oregon’s nursery, retail, and greenhouse industry. The show was founded in 1973, celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, and is now poised to help green industry professionals “Meet the Future.” Any revenue realized by the OAN is reinvested into the industry through education, research, marketing support and government relations. For more information about the 2024 Farwest Show, visit [FarwestShow.com](http://FarwestShow.com) or call 503-682-5089.