

New pink fancy-leaved caladium debuts

December 13 2011



The new UF-172 fancy-leaved caladium is uniquely characterized with large attractive pink blotches and red petioles. Credit: Photo by Zhanao Deng

Beautiful ornamental caladiums, valued for their bright, long-lasting, and colorful leaves, are prized throughout the world as container and landscape plants. In Florida, where more than 95% of the world's caladium tubers are produced, researchers are continuously working to develop new varieties to satisfy consumer demand. Plant scientists Zhanao Deng, Brent K. Harbaugh and Natalia A. Peres from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences recently introduced a new caladium (*HortScience*) that they say should be an all-around winner.

"Developing new pink varieties, which have been especially popular with consumers, has been an important breeding objective for our caladium

breeding program", said Deng. "This new variety (currently named 'UF-172') is a fancy-leaved caladium uniquely characterized with large attractive pink blotches and red petioles."

'UF-172' was bred from a cross between caladiums 'White Christmas' and 'Red Flash'. Deng explained that 'Red Flash' was used as the male parent because of its vigor, good performance in large containers and landscapes, large tubers, large plant and leaves, and tolerance to sun burns. 'White Christmas' was selected because of its large blotches and growth habit in containers.

The new variety performed significantly better as a pot or landscape plant than 'Carolyn Whorton', currently the most popular fancy-leaved pink cultivar on the market. "'UF-172' has the potential to produce prefinished or finished pot plants several days to one week earlier than 'Carolyn Whorton'", the study reported.

'UF-172' demonstrated high tuber yield potential and performed well in container forcing and landscape use. The breeders recommend the variety for planting in either sunny or shady locations.

More information: The complete study and abstract are available on the ASHS *HortScience* electronic journal web site:

[hortsci.ashspublications.org/c ... ontent/full/46/1/132](https://hortsci.ashspublications.org/content/full/46/1/132)

Provided by American Society for Horticultural Science

Citation: New pink fancy-leaved caladium debuts (2011, December 13) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-12-pink-fancy-leaved-caladium-debuts.html>

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