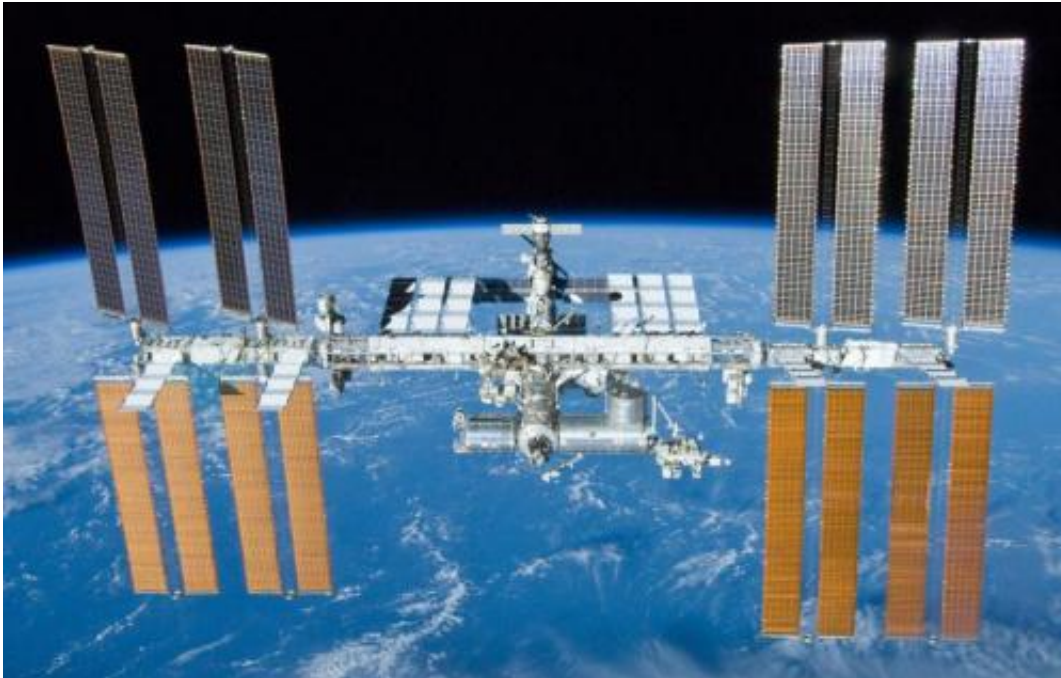


# First flowers in space bloom on space station

January 18 2016, by Emilee Speck, Orlando Sentinel

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The International Space Station is featured in this image photographed by an STS-132 crew member on board the Space Shuttle Atlantis after the station and shuttle began their post-undocking relative separation. Credit: NASA/Crew of STS-132

The first flower grown in space has bloomed. NASA Astronaut Scott Kelly, International Space Station gardener, shared photos of the prized zinnias this weekend.

"Yes, there are other [life forms](#) in space," Kelly said on Twitter.

The story of the delicate space flowers is fraught with ups and downs, similar to gardens on Earth.

Just last month, the small crop wasn't looking good. The leaves and buds were covered in mold because of a leak in the plant container.

"I'm going to have to channel my inner Mark Watney," Kelly posted then, referencing the potato-growing skills of the astronaut in "The Martian."

An unplanned spacewalk delayed fixing the problem in the [space](#) garden and by Dec. 22 they were dying, said NASA's Trent Smith. Kelly had to act quickly to cut away the moldy leaves and dry the plant chamber.

By Jan. 12 the [plants](#) were on the rebound and some buds had sprouted, Kelly said.



This image made available by NASA via Twitter posted on Jan. 17, 2016 by space station commander Scott Kelly, shows a zinnia flower out in the sun at the International Space Station. Last month, Kelly had to fight off mold that threatened to kill all the flowers in the space station's mini-greenhouse. (Scott Kelly/NASA via AP)

The bright zinnias are not the first crop of the Veggie experiment, but the lessons from their growing process could be applied to tomatoes, also a flowering planet, said Smith.

Red romaine [lettuce](#) was the first crop from the Veggie plant growth facility, installed in May 2014. Kelly and Astronaut Kjell Lindgren snacked on the second crop of lettuce in July 2015; the first crop was sent back to Earth for analysis. The third round of the experiments will include Chinese cabbage and more lettuce.

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