

Front Lines

3/15/2009

BIG RED Geranium Part of Home Depot's VIVA!

Ellen C. Wells

Line 'Calliope Dark Red,' a new geranium variety introduced in the past year by Syngenta Flowers, will be available nationwide under a new name—Big Red—this spring through the VIVA! Program in all The Home Depot stores.

As 'Calliope Dark Red,' this variety showed outstanding performance in last year's variety trials. Its flower color is true red with dark-green foliage and a mounding habit. It is an inter-specific hybrid of a hanging basket geranium and an upright zonal type. This combination gives it the ability to perform well in both basket and garden situations.

Why the new name? Syngenta's Gary Falkenstein says that Home Depot wanted to do a big promotion with Calliope, but Syngenta did not want to make it an exclusive. So they decided to launch the plant under a different name (the Calliope name will still be on the pot, only in much smaller print).

Regardless of how it does as Big Red, Calliope cutting sales have been booming, Gary reports. Walmart and Lowes will be selling it, and lots of cuttings have been sold to IGCs, too.

"Without a doubt, it's the biggest first-year introduction of a single variety," Gary says. "We've sold over six times as much as any new, first-year geranium variety. Our sales and technical staff have visited several of the big producers and most all of the production is looking very sharp."

The VIVA! Program, sold exclusively through The Home Depot, introduces a variety of new plants into the U.S. and Canadian markets for use in home landscapes. Horticultural marketing firm Floragem works with The Home Depot on the VIVA! collection.

For more information, visit www.vivagarden.com.