

## Features

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### Behind the Variety: Pure “Joy”

*Katie Elzer-Peters*



The name Benary is synonymous with begonias, not just because they released the world's first commercial F1-hybrid ornamental in 1909 (Fibrous Begonia Primadonna), but because they continue to innovate, bringing new varieties of this commercial staple to market. 2015 marks the debut of the trademarked Nonstop JOY, a yellow, seed-grown tuberous begonia with deep yellow flowers that cover the entire plant from top to trailing.

Sabine Kratzenberg is the breeder behind this new variety. “The breeding project was named ‘Globe’ because the target was to create a basket type, which would hit the needs of growers and consumers,” she said. They had learned what they needed to develop in a new variety from the marketing and feedback revolving around a previous introduction, Begonia Illumination, which is a trailing begonia with cascading branches, primarily used for hanging

baskets.

The baskets looked great when fully-grown and protected from wind. There were some complicating factors, though. “We learned that growers and consumers did not like some characteristics of this variety. The long branches would break easily and make the baskets difficult to ship for growers and susceptible to wind damage—for consumers,” Sabine noted. Retailers had some issues with this variety, as well. “What I saw was that at the point of sale, Illumination—if not sold in fully developed baskets—did not present well because the flowers were all clustered at the bottom of the plants.”

With that knowledge in hand, Sabine developed a plan that would eventually result in Nonstop JOY, starting with the basics: good germination, quality young plants, well-branched growth habits, and high vigor and health. “My idea was to create a series where the plants would form nice baskets, but without the long, extending branches that easily break. The baskets would look like a globe when fully grown out,” she explains. “Additionally, the flowers would grow upright to make the plants showy at an early sales stage.” Realizing that plan would allow Benary to offer a plant that hit all three main constituent groups: growers, retailers and consumers.

She hit all points with Nonstop JOY. Growers can sleeve and ship the plants without damage, retailers can

stock them in the store as younger plants (because the flowers are showy on top of the plants, not just trailing) and the consumer can grow them without issues of broken branches due to wind damage.

Nonstop JOY is an F1-hybrid from an upright female and a semi-trailing male. They started trying to produce a plant that would perform well in baskets, but soon recognized the capacity for universal use of this plant. It's great in baskets, but also in mixed containers and the landscape for season-long color. "That's where the name JOY added to the brand Nonstop comes from," says Sabine. "That's what we see in the variety—the joy." The Nonstop JOY Yellow is the first color. They plan to develop more during the next few years so that the entire range of tuberous begonias will be available in this type.

Most of the plants covered in "Behind the Variety" have been on the market for as little as a year or two or as many as 20 years. Nonstop JOY is brand new, but feedback during the 2015 California Spring Trials and during the pack trials in the Netherlands was positive, so they're optimistic for a strong debut. It's the only true universal begonia on the market right now, says Sabine.

"The trailing types always were unimpressive from above because the show was all in the cascading habit, while the bedding varieties did not form nice baskets because of the upright habit. Nonstop JOY fits all." On her official bio, Sabine says, "Breeding means for me using the diversity of nature for creating new crops." Nonstop JOY is the perfect manifestation of that philosophy. **GP**

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