

A new colocasia, random thoughts and Beyoncé's blue



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# TROPICAL TOPICS

## COMING UP THIS WEEK:

It's Rippled!  
Three Shopping Trends  
Random Thoughts  
Finally ...

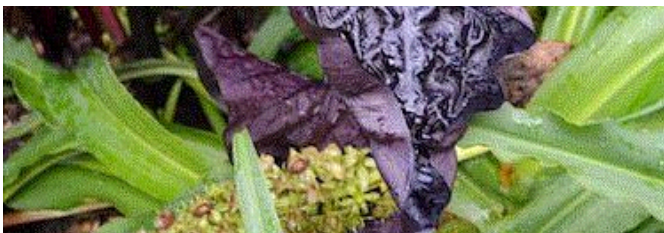


## It's Rippled!

Looking to add a spectacular foliage plant to your production line or combo pot program? I have just the thing for you. It's a colocasia called Black Ripple. Just take a look at it and you'll see it's quite literally rippled.





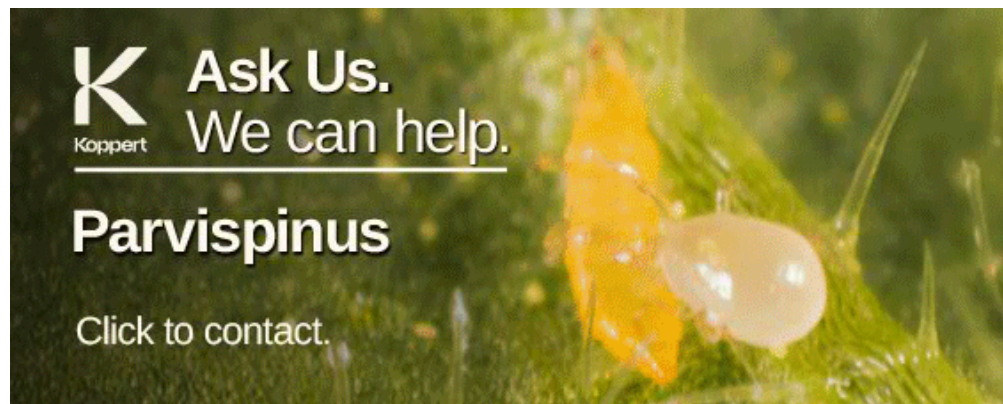


This attractive tropical is bred by Brian Williams of [Brian's Botanicals](#) in Louisville, Kentucky. Yes, a tropical plant breeder in Kentucky! You see, according to the folks at Plants Nouveau, the company introducing Black Ripple, Brian is in "zone denial." Despite being steadfastly in Zone 7, Brian's love of and dedication to all things tropical keeps his greenhouses full of luscious plants like Black Ripple and other large-leaved, warm-weathered foliage plants.



What does Black Ripple have going for it? First, the extent of the leaf puckering or rippling makes the leaf look amazingly shiny. Second, it produces lots of stems and leaves. And third, it's a clumping plant, not a runner. That means it won't take over and be a bully like some colocasias can be. Oh, and it's fairly compact, too, so it'll look great on the retail bench in a 1-, 2- or 3 gal. pot.

Has Black Ripple piqued your interest? Want to get your hands on some? Find liners at AG3 and Southern Living perennial growers. Finished plants can be found anywhere growing Southern Living and Sunset Western plants.



## Three Holiday Shopping Trends

When we think of “trend,” we think of style or taste or fashion, or at least I do. Maybe I’m being overly influenced by the Bravo Network. Anyway, trends can entail so much more than just what someone’s wearing, and it’s good to refresh myself—and for me to refresh you—on what non-fashion trends are happening out there.

I found in a recent “Think With Google” e-newsletter that the way people shop can have trends. And all-seeing Google has dove into their vast array of data from this holiday shopping season to pull out three [holiday shopping trends](#). Here they are in a nutshell:

1. Customers want us to inspire them. According to Google, 34% of people say that discovering new products and getting ideas are what they enjoy most about shopping, specifically online shopping. One way to leverage inspiration and online searching is by keying in on your keywords. Find which ones are trending and be sure to include those on your site in some way. An example of a trending keyword is “gift box,” which has seen an increase in searches of more than 85% in the last two years. Houseplants can be gift boxes!
2. Customers are thrill seekers. Folks are always looking for a good deal and will wait for that good deal until the last minute (hence the “thrill seeker” part because they are cutting it close). Google found that 52% of shoppers say finding a great deal is what they enjoy most about shopping. A majority of shoppers (58%) also says they believe they’ll get a better deal online rather than in-store. And even though shoppers do head to brick-and-mortars for purchases, they usually start the shopping experience online.
3. Time is their most valuable asset. Google says 13% of shoppers don’t want to do their shopping research. Whether it’s a matter of not enjoying it or not having the time. And when they want to buy, they want to buy something now, in the easiest and fastest way possible. Customers also say they want flexibility with returns and a totally autonomous, self-service experience; 55% say they prefer it when a company makes it easy for them to do what they want (buy, return, etc.) without having to talk to anyone.



How might these holiday shopping trends inform your future offerings?

## NEW FOR 2026

### Heart to Heart® Midnight Oil Caladium

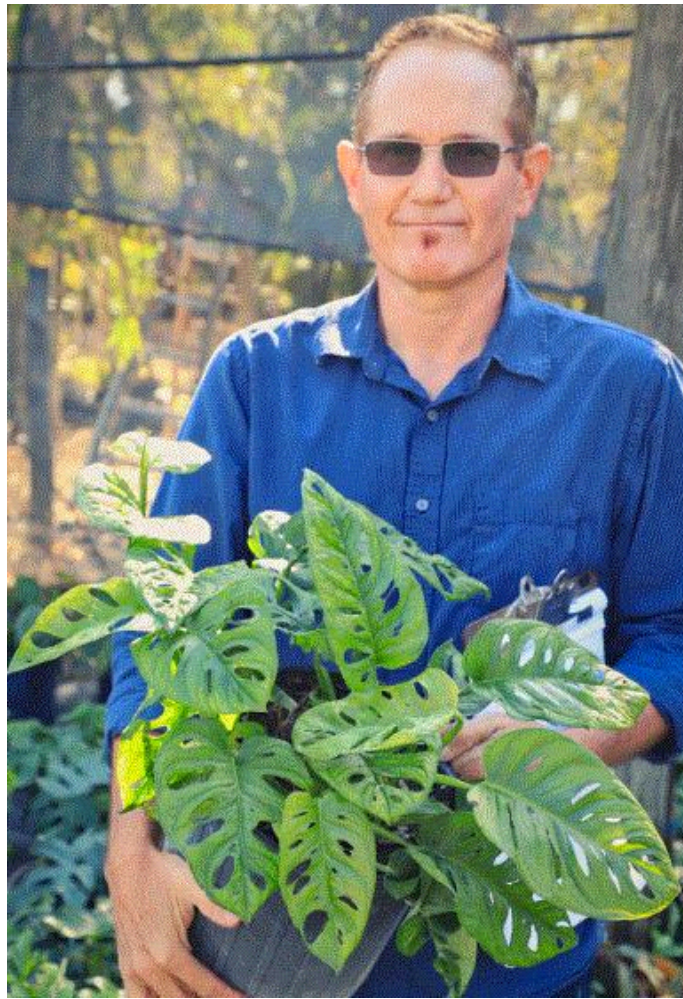


### Random End-of-Year Thoughts

Turns out this edition of *Tropical Topics* is my last for the year! I think this gives me the opportunity to share some random yet tropically related thoughts.

- It's currently 16F outside. Without windchill. And it's windy. If consumers are anything like me, this weather makes them want to surround themselves in lusciously tropical surroundings. If I were a garden center owner, I'd get to creating a tropical retreat inside the store as soon as the 50% off Christmas sale is over. Or sooner!
- IGCs will have to order those products in, of course. Which means they will have to deal with shipping, shippers will have to deal with shipping and growers will have to deal with shippers. Luckily, [TPIE](#) (January 22-24 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida) will have a session all about shipping! Moderator Bisser Georgiev of Live Trends Design Group and the plant logistics experts in the session will offer various options and explanations. Sponsored by Central Florida Ferns. Don't miss it. It takes place on Thursday the 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8:30 a.m.
- If you are going to TPIE, I suggest hitting up [Garden Industries](#) (contact [David](#)) and [Excelsa Gardens](#) (contact [Colin Friedrich](#)) in Loxahatchee, Florida, about an hour and a half drive north of the show. Chris (and Laurie) Beytes and I visited prior to the show last year and had a fabulous time! 2020 will be Excelsa's 30<sup>th</sup> year, by the way. Congrats! I think they are planning something special. Another favorite stop from a previous year was the [Redland Fruit & Spice Park](#) in Homestead if you're headed south of Fort Lauderdale. It was one of the best tours I've ever taken—and Bossman Beytes agrees!





David Bache of Garden Industries



Mark and Colin Friedrich of Excelsa Gardens



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## Finally ...

Who rules the world? Beyoncé, obvs. It's generally acknowledged that Beyoncé is the modern-day Midas, with anything she touches turning to gold—or more conveniently, cold hard cash.

In a recent “Ask Me Anything” interview with *Elle* magazine, Beyoncé revealed that blue vanda orchids are her most favorite flower. Hey, maybe Pantone took a cue from Queen B when they decided their color of the year.



If you want to add to your stockpile of gold, better get your hands on some blue vandas and really promote the Beyoncé out of it. I bet you could find some at TPIE. More info next time on where you might source these.

Happy Holidays, everyone! It's been an honor to be in your inbox 24 times this year. Here's to doing it all again in 2020! Suggestions, comments, questions or news to share? Just drop me a line at [ewells@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ewells@ballpublishing.com).

*Ellen*

**Ellen Wells**  
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