

Caladium shortage looming, plus Taiwanese dendrobiums



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Spotted at TPIE
See The Video
Tropical Availability
Dendrobium Imports



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Caladium Shortage Looming

One of the things we didn't see much of at January's TPIE in Florida were caladiums. After the show, Chris Beytes had heard mention of an impending shortage of that crop, and realized after the fact that many of the usual Florida caladium growers weren't exhibiting at the show. The folks at Abbott-IPCO did indeed exhibit with caladiums and samples of other products. Below is a shot of their caladiums used in a mixed bouquet which I thought was kind of neat. But Abbott-IPCO's were all I could remember seeing.





A bunch of sleuthing by Chris and myself reveals that there is indeed a caladium shortage. Right after Hurricane Irma, I had heard from Terri Bates of caladium grower Bates Sons & Daughters in Lake Placid. In fact, I reported in a *Tropical Topics* in late September about Terri's resulting flooding and wind damage. At the time she estimated crop damage was around 20-25%.

That estimate was before the tropical storm hit and dropped 7+ inches of rain in one day. Terri is now upping that to a 35% loss.

Classic Caladiums' Bob Hartman is hearing of grower losses between 30-80%. Significant! Both Bob and Terri report that the "icing on the cake" was the delay in harvesting due to that early January cold snap. "There are not enough bulbs and the harvesting is behind. That's our story," Terri explained. Those who have ordered are in luck but those who ordered late or are new customers will have difficulty finding bulbs.

Bob sent a letter out to Classic's customers explaining the looming shortage—and also explaining a bit about bulb growth. The storms hit at the time when bulbs size up the most. The bad weather hit and the bulb growth basically stopped. Industry wide, Bob says, bulbs are going to be a lot smaller. Beautiful—but smaller.

If there is anything good here, it could be this: Classic Caladiums found that the bulbs grown in raised beds (under plastic) suffered significantly less damage than open field planting, resulting in yields that are "hundreds of percentage points higher" than the field beds. Considering this, Classic will now be producing only on raised plastic mulched beds.

Like all farmers, caladium growers are already planning for better production methods and crops next year while dealing with the current poor crop. Like I advised with the hurricane-induced fernery devastation, maybe this year you turn to alternatives, but keep your support going for your caladium suppliers. They'll be back in force next season.

Spotted at TPIE

Spotted? It's more like variegated. And Suntory Flowers calls it Marbled. I'm talking about the latest variety added to their Sun Parasol team. Sun Parasol Giant Marbled Crimson is the

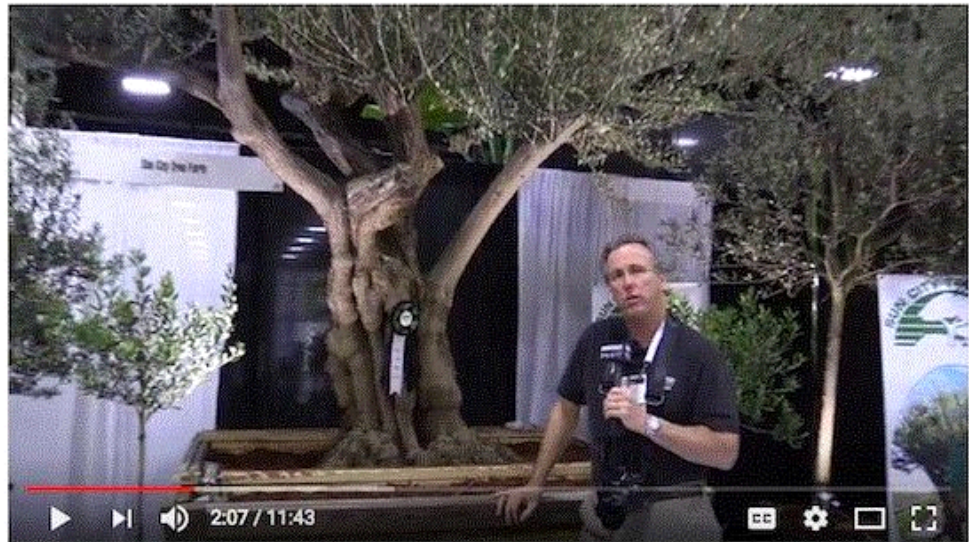
variegated sport of their popular Giant Crimson. They say the variegation is stable, too. And it *does* look like a giant—its flowers are 4 to 6 inches, it's a natural climber and it has vigorous growth, matching that of the Giant Group as a whole.



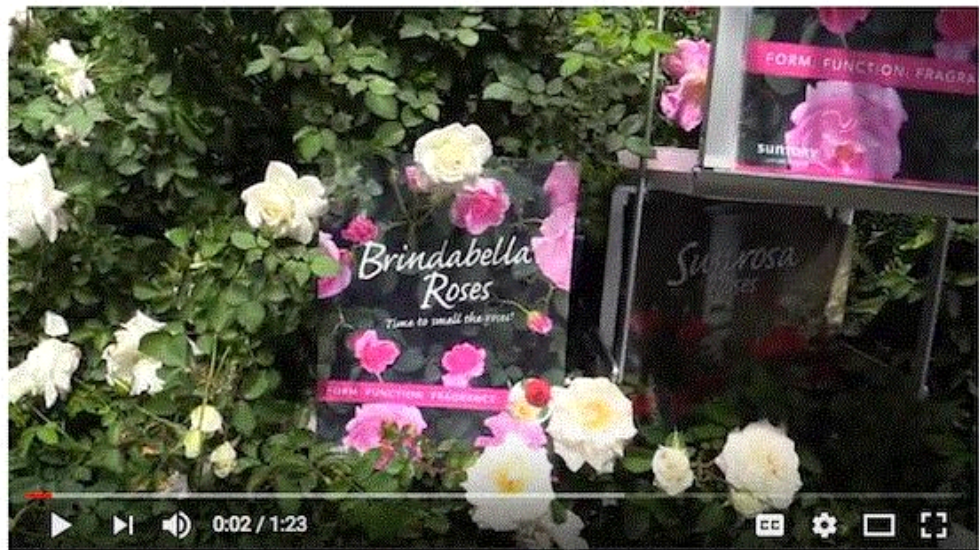
That does look striking, doesn't it? I'm usually on the fence about variegation but I do like this one.

See The Video

Couldn't make it to TPIE? Chris Beytes and his wife Laurie shot a great video of cool stuff they spotted on the show floor. Many of the items they show were part of the TPIE's Cool Product Awards in collaboration with The Garden Center Group. You can watch the [VIDEO](#) here.



And speaking of Suntory Flowers above, Sun-Fire Nurseries—which works closely with Suntory to bring their products to market—somehow didn't make it to Chris's original video. But with quite a few new things at the Sun-Fire booth, Chris put another video together—you can watch that video [HERE](#). Chris shows you this new mandevilla as well as Suntory's new line of shrub roses called Brindabella.



Tropical Availability

Over the years I've gotten several emails from readers in response to my TPIE coverage basically saying, "Sure, those are some great tropical plants but I can't get my hands on any." This is mainly in response to my mentions of new varieties being released by Costa Farms. I emailed Costa's director of R&D, Mike Rimland, to get a better understanding of what's going on.

I asked him about availability using Costa's new intro Cherries Jubilee aglaonema as an example.

Mike's response in a nutshell: There's just not enough stock available, especially with new varieties. Of the new varieties Costa included in TPIE's New Plant Showcase, none of them have been sold yet. In fact, they won't be available until late 2018.

"We showed them so people can see what we are working on to release as soon as possible," Mike explained. "Believe me, we wish it went faster. But these plants we showed are all reproduced from vegetative cuttings, and building stock to get cuttings on indoor-type plants is slow, and takes massive amounts of stock pots to get enough cuttings to get to market."

Sun Parasol
FiredUp Coral



Taiwanese Dendrobium Imports

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced last week that it has finalized a rule allowing dendrobium species in growing medium to be exported from Taiwan into the U.S. This new rule will take effect March 30.

What makes dendrobiums safe to import is the "systems approach." This approach protects against plant pests and diseases coming into the U.S. by requiring Taiwanese greenhouses to register and go through monitoring of specific sanitation and pest control practices. Participating growers must sign a written agreement to comply with U.S. regulations and allow for inspectors to inspect their facilities. In addition, each shipment that comes in must have a phytosanitary certificate.

Several other orchid species are already allowed to be exported from Taiwan into the U.S., including phalaenopsis and oncidium.

More tropical goodies next time! Meanwhile, have comments, questions, quandaries? If so, just drop me a line at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

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