

# Tropical Foliage



'Red Hot' Anthurium

Most foliage plants are produced in shaded greenhouses and sold as potted plants for interior decoration. Caladium differs from other tropical foliage plants as it is produced in open fields and can be used both in the landscape and as a potted plant. Foliage plants are bred for their attractive foliage and/or flowers. Currently, more than 500 species are grown as foliage plants. The wholesale value of foliage plants

in the U.S. rose from \$29 million in 1969 to \$585 million in 2001. Florida now leads the U.S. in the production of foliage plants, accounting for more than 55 percent of the national wholesale value. Foliage breeding began in 1976 at FAES with Jake Henny and Gary Wilfret focusing on members of the family Araceae (referred to as aroids) and Caladium, respectively.

## Aroids

Twenty Araceae varieties, including Aglaonema (6), Anthurium (4) and Dieffenbachia (10) have been released by plant breeder Jake Henny. Aglaonema and Dieffenbachia are in the top 10 genera in wholesale value in Florida, while Anthurium's production acreage and value are increasing rapidly.

Several of these varieties have become important to the commercial foliage market.

Anthurium **Southern Blush**, one of the first potted-plant Anthuriums, was grown worldwide. Anthurium **Red Hot** has been the most popular variety in Florida for the past 5 years.

Dieffenbachia **Triumph**, the first foliage variety, was released in 1986 and is still being propagated. Aglaonema **Silver Bay** and **Golden Bay** are very popular interior plants. Their success and acceptance by the industry led to the creation of the Bay series of Aglaonema, to which we have added **Emerald Bay** (2001) and **Diamond Bay** (2001).

### Tropical Foliage Plant Varieties

Plant	Variety	Date of Release	Plant	Variety	Date of Release
Aglaonema	Stripes	1988	Dieffenbachia	Orange Hot	2001
	Flamingo, Silver Bay	1992		Triumph, Victory	1986
	Golden Bay	1999		Tropic Star	1987
	Emerald Bay, Diamond Bay	2001		Starry Nights	1988
Anthurium	Southern Blush	1987		Star White	1992
	Red Hot	1995		Sparkles, Star Bright	1994
	Show Biz	1999		Sterling, GoldRush, Tropic Honey	2001



Testing Florida caladium

## Caladium

Caladium is a tropical foliage plant that is asexually propagated from tubers. Most of the world's caladium tubers are produced in Highlands County in Central Florida on the muck and sandy soils around Lake Placid and

Sebring. Their wholesale value is approximately \$15 million annually and they are produced on nearly 1500 acres.

Until FAES initiated a caladium breeding program in 1976 under the direction of Gary Wilfret, the industry had been without new

caladium introductions since the 1950s. The purpose of the caladium breeding program was to develop new varieties emphasizing bright, colorful leaves, multiple leaf development, and large, good quality tubers. Since 2002, Zhanao Deng, in cooperation with Brent Harbaugh, has continued the caladium breeding program to develop varieties better adapted for container production, with resistance to *Fusarium* tuber rot and *Pythium* root rot.

The variety **Florida Sweetheart** has been most widely accepted by the industry. Its unique pink color, leaf shape, compact habit, and vigor have resulted in acceptance by both the caladium tuber-producing industry and the greenhouse and nursery industries. The estimated acreage of Florida Sweetheart in 2002 was approximately 25 acres, representing about 15 percent of the dwarf/lance varieties grown. The fancy-leaved varieties from the FAES breeding program are grown on approximately 50 acres, representing about 3 to 4 percent of the caladiums grown in Florida.

### Caladium Varieties Released by FAES

Variety	Date of Release
Florida Sunrise, Florida Cardinal, Florida Roselight	1988
Florida Elise, Florida Sweetheart, Florida Fantasy	1990
Florida Calypso	1998
Florida Ruffles, Florida Irish Lace	2000
Florida Whitewater, Florida White Ruffles, Florida Blizzard	2001
Florida Moonlight	2002