



March 2008

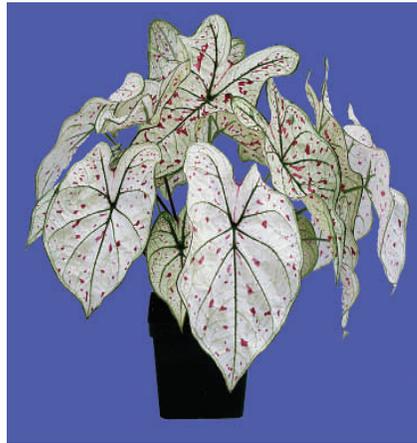
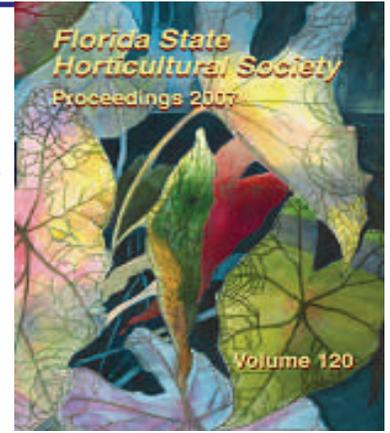
Florida State Horticultural Society

Volume 18 No. 3

FSHS Newsletter

FSHS NL 18: No.3 March 2008

The 120th 2007 FSHS Proceedings are out! The CDs are in the mail. We are very proud of the cover (shown here) and of course, its contents. Thanks to Ed E. et al. for all their hard work! Your FSHS Board Members and Local Arrangements Committee (see the following articles by Drs. Simonne & Fitzpatrick) have made great progress on next year's meeting, June 1-4, 2008 in Ft. Lauderdale. Check it out at www.FSHS.org. Abstracts for presentations and papers are due 10 March to the respective Section Vice Presidents. Some Sections are already full. Sorry, no abstracts can be accepted unless your dues and page charges are paid up and current. We will be invoicing page charges and dues for 2007 (Palm Beach) meeting now. We will try to get out another newsletter in May if you send us your news and ideas. — Jim S.



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The 121st FSHS Meeting

June 1– 4, 2008.

Marriot N, Ft. Lauderdale

Keynote speaker !

Monday June 2 at 9 AM

FL Ag Commissioner

Charles Bronson ,

**“Florida Horticulture:
Pensacola to Key West” .**

Abstracts Due 10 March!

Feature Article -

CALADIUMS IN FLORIDA

Proceedings cover: *On the cover of the 2007 Proceedings of the FSHS, vol. 120, we present a colorful illustration by the Pembroke Pines Florida artist Effie Lewis (see pg 1). This is an imaginative version of the caladium variety 'Calypso'. The following is a timely article related to our cover.*

Among the many flowers and plants that make Florida the land of flowers, caladiums have a fascinating story in Florida's history and a strong association with Florida horticulturists. Florida growers and gardeners have bestowed a special love to caladiums.

Native to the Amazon basin, caladiums were first introduced in the United States in 1893 when they were displayed at the Chicago's World's Fair. Intrigued by their unusual colorful leaves, Dr. Henry Nehrling brought caladiums to his Palm Cottage Gardens in Gotha near Orlando and began hybridizing them and making new selections. Dr. Nehrling produced numerous varieties, among which were 'John Peed' and 'Fannie Munson' that are still popular and commercially produced. About the same time, another pioneering horticulturist, Theodore L. Mead, hybridized caladiums in his farm in Oviedo.

Lake Placid (as well as Sebring and surrounding areas) has been known as the Caladium Capital of the World. In the late 1920's, caladiums took root there in the warm fertile soil and thrived. In 1945 at the end of World War II, veterans returned home and the Highlands County IFAS Extension office introduced these plants to the veterans. With enthusiasm and efforts, and determination and innovation, several veterans tried and soon turned these plants into a new commercial crop. Production of caladiums increased to ~150 acres in the 1950's and exploded in the 1960's and 1970's, with as many as thirty-five farms planting nearly 900 acres by the early 1980's. Today there are over 1200 acres of land that are planted each spring with caladiums.

New plants sprout and grow in late spring, summer and fall, producing a field of spectacular colors. Thousands of visitors are welcomed to these colorful fields as Caladium Festivals are held in late August. Growers work through the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons to harvest a new crop of tubers. During late winter, whole spring and early summer, as many as 50 to 70 million caladium tubers are shipped throughout the US and Canada, and to some 40 countries in Europe and Asia, to supply >95% of the world's demands.

A major role in the Florida caladium industry has been played by UF/IFAS since its extension faculty introduced the plant to the returning WWII veterans. New techniques and information for caladium production, protection and processing are constantly delivered to growers through IFAS extension. Since 1958, IFAS has conducted research in soil preparation and

fumigation, fertilization and irrigation, weed control and disease management for caladium tuber production, and research in tuber processing, storing, and forcing for plant utilization. In 1976, IFAS initiated a caladium breeding program at its Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Bradenton (now at Balm). The breeding program has refined and developed



techniques essential for caladium breeding and improved our understanding of the mode of trait inheritance in caladium. Over the past 18 years, the program has released 17 cultivars, with hundreds of elite breeding lines under

evaluation for future release. For example, Red Ruffles (a red strap leaved cultivar released in 2000 shown here), and Moonlight (a white fancy leaved cultivar released in 2002, below) have gained popularity and are available from a number of sources.



Cranberry Star (white heart-shaped leaves with numerous bright burgundy spots see page 1) was released last year and is being increased for

marketing. These new cultivars not only produce an abundance of brightly colorful leaves, but also produce a high yield of quality multi-branched tubers. Improved disease resistance and/or stress tolerance have also been added as new breeding objectives. Ultimately, these objectives translate into better crops for growers and beautiful, easy, and tough plants for Florida consumers, who have accepted, enjoyed and loved caladiums.

More information on caladium is available at <http://caladiums.ifas.ufl.edu/> and <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

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