

New Caladium Varieties



The latest colors, shapes and sizes in a proven performer

Jimmy Turner

Caladiums? What could possibly be new in this classic plant? For most gardeners, the assumption is caladiums come in only three colors — red, pink or white. Well, I'm here to spread the news that there is a whole new world of caladiums coming to the market! The grower Classic Caladiums and the University of Florida have been working overtime to breed new improvements to this already proven performer for Texas landscapes. We Texas gardeners now will have caladiums not only in deeper and brighter colors, but also in new colors, including coppery orange. We can also look forward to larger leaves, better growth habit, and new leaf shapes.

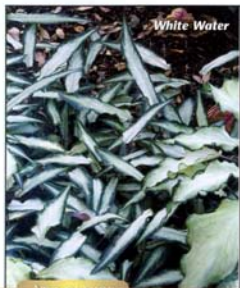
In the last few years, the Dallas Arboretum Trial Program has tested numerous new cultivars and re-tested the old classics to find the best varieties for our climate. The good news is that every variety we tested performed well, but there were 23 new cultivars that we thought were exceptional.

Caladiums are usually grouped into two types: fancy- and strap-leaved. Fancy-leaved types are generally larger plants with larger leaves and generally prefer shadier conditions. Strap-leaved types have thicker leaves on shorter plants that tolerate brighter conditions. Physically, you can tell the difference by where the stem meets the leaf: fancy caladiums have a stem toward the center; strap types have a stem that meets the edge.

STRAP-OR LANCE-LEAVED CULTIVARS

Blushing Bride — a medium-sized variety with white leaves blushed with rose pink, blushing darker as they age.

Candyland — an intermediate cultivar with pink spots and pink or white main



AT A GLANCE

Latin name: *Caladium x hybrid*
Common name: Caladium
Flowers: Not showy
Mature height: Dependent on variety
Hardiness: Summer annual
Soil: Well-drained
Exposure: Shade to sun
Water usage: High
Sources: Local nurseries or mail order

veins. Can take full sun in the landscape and reaches heights of 12 to 18 inches.

Iceberg — 8- to 16-inch plants with unique coloration. This interesting cultivar has been one my personal favorites. Dark green leaves splashed with chartreuse and lime green, with a small touch of scarlet red at the center. Incredible planted in containers.

Mt. Everest — a very large (18-inch) variety with large leaves of white, bordered in soft green with pink to red main veins.

Peppermint — a strap leaf that resembles its candy namesake, with white leaves striped and splashed with bright red. As

leaves mature, coloration becomes stronger. Coloration was somewhat better in the shade.

Red Ruffles — features leaves that are a strong red with green border. Has a mound-ing habit.

Starburst — bright, rose-pink leaves bordered with light green that are set off by glowing white main veins. Will take full sun and reach 6 to 12 inches.

Sweetheart — the best pink strap leaf. Bright pink centers with a green margin. Sun-tolerant.

Victoria — has a highly ruffled margin and deep rose color, and is a tissue culture sport of the lance-leaved (strap) variety Sweetheart. Can take full sun in the landscape, although it's happy in partial shade. Reaches heights of 6 to 12 inches. Can be used in the foreground or as border plant.

White Delight — similar in size and habit to the old standbys White Wing or Jackie Suthers. Faster growing than White Wing and whiter than either White Wing or Jackie Suthers. Very sun-tolerant and therefore very useful in the landscape.

White Ruffles — features white leaves with green-mottled margins. Great landscape variety. Good in full sun.

White Marble — a beautiful strap type that can stand full sun. Closest varieties would be White Wing or Jackie Suthers, but unlike either of the older varieties, White Marble has polka-dots. In bright light, may be pink. More upright than White Wing and whiter than Jackie Suthers.

White Star — similar to White Wing in size and habit, but much faster to sprout and finish, and has wider leaves. Has a white background with light-pink main veins and dark-green border. Mature leaves may have a few pink spots.



Starburst

JANISKE TURBINEER

White Water – one of my personal favorites. A different leaf shape than any other commercial variety. Each leaf is approximately 6 to 8 inches long and only about 1 inch wide. The white leaves with green, mottled margins are awesome planted solid in containers for shady patios. I also like it as a border plant in the landscape. With adequate water, this variety can take full sun.

FANCY-LEAVED CULTIVARS

Calypso – resembles the old Carolyn Whorton cultivar, with pink to white mottling. Excellent landscape variety.

Firecracker Red – a strong, sun-tolerant plant. Useful in landscapes or large containers.

Garden White – a fancy-leaved variety selected for sun tolerance. Fast growing and

tall, it is perfect for landscape bedding and larger containers.

Moonlight – a recent (2004) University of Florida introduction. In the landscape, it prefers partially sunny to shady locations, since it sunburns in full sun. This is my favorite white fancy-leaved caladium. Leaves are so reflective they look as if they were dusted with silver.

Rose Glow – resembles the older variety Rosebud, which has had production problems the last few years. Rose Glow has white main veins that contrast well with a pink to rose background. In the landscape, it can take full sun and reaches heights of 12 to 18 inches.

Roselight – large pink blotches on green background. Good landscape variety. If you like polka dots, this is a variety for you!



Raspberry Moon

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Moonlight

JIMMY TURNER

Culture

All caladiums are well suited to hot, humid summer climates and are easy to grow as long as you follow a few guidelines:

When Do not plant the tubers until soil temperatures are above 65 degrees. (As a rule of thumb, wait until after Mother's Day.) If you rush to plant your caladiums, and the soil is cold and wet, the bulbs will only rot.

Placement All caladiums perform well in filtered sunlight to full shade, although a few varieties will tolerate full sun if watered heavily. Protect the larger fancy-leaved varieties from high winds. When buying caladium tubers, you'll discover they come in various sizes called "grades," based on the diameter of the tuber. They are categorized from largest to smallest — Mammoth, Jumbo, No. 1, and No. 2. In general, the larger the tuber, the bigger the plant you will get. I like to use Mammoth bulbs to make extra-large statements in containers. I use Jumbo and No. 1 tubers for bedding designs.

Planting Plant the tubers 2 inches deep in well-drained soil that's been amended with compost. Plant them "right side up" — look for the side with "eyes" or growing points. Space 8 to 12 inches apart, depending on the mature size of the variety.

Watering Caladiums are native to the rain forests of Latin America, which has basically two seasons, warm and wet, or warm and dry. The most common problem with caladiums is that during the summer they fall over — a response to drying out. Even a few days of wilting will trigger caladiums to start their dormancy period, beginning with the leaves "laying over." Once this happens, nothing will start them growing again. Prevention is the only medicine for this problem — never let them dry out. If in doubt, it's best to overwater. The more sunlight caladiums are grown in, the higher the water requirements.

Fertilization There is a myth that fertilizing caladiums will turn the leaves green. Actually, the opposite is true. Caladiums are heavy feeders and grow much better with regular fertilization. I recommend a balanced, controlled-release fertilizer to keep plants in active growth all summer.

Raspberry Moon — I love the name and the plant! Leaves have a background of light chartreuse with a few blotches of dark green. Overlaid on this glowing background are dark raspberry-pink to raspberry-red polka dots, swirls, and splashes, which will cover up to 70 percent of the leaf. Can take full sun in the landscape and reaches heights of more than 18 inches.

Summer Rose — similar to the familiar Rosebud in color and performance, but the colors do not fade as much.

Twist and Shout — believe it or not, a caladium with a burnt-orange background! The unique orange color is complemented by dark olive-green dots and leaf border. Can take full sun in the landscape and reaches a height of 18 inches.

I hope you're inspired to try some of these new caladium choices in your garden this year. Try the fancy- or strap-leaved varieties planted in shade containers or planted *en masse* in shady areas. I love mixing similar-shaped varieties of differing colors for a distinctive look. If you can't find these new varieties at your local nursery, try shopping direct from Classic Caladiums online at www.classicalcaladiums.com. I can't wait to see what new colors and leaf shapes are coming next! ★

About the author: Jimmy Turner is senior director of gardens at the Dallas Arboretum and a contributing editor to this publication. Visit www.dallasplanttrials.org for more information on his trials.



Iceberg

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