

Production of Caladiums in 12" and 14" Containers

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People have occasionally asked me what plants other than impatiens or begonias grow well in shade. I have often suggested caladiums. The typical response has been they are not showy enough. Showy would be an understatement for the large caladiums displayed at the trade show booth of Bates Sons and Daughters. The large containers of caladiums were a showstopper for me at the 2001 Southeast Greenhouse Conference and Trade Show.

After talking with Terri Bates (863-465-3274) about production of the large size pots and baskets, I decided to grow some for Spring 2002. Terri Bates was very helpful with selection of cultivars and cultural tips for 14" pots and 12" baskets

Since I had not grown caladiums in years, I also reviewed information in some of my references. I decided to grow in 14" plastic terracotta pots and 12" wire baskets lined with coco fiber. I choose four different caladium cultivars: 'Florida Sweetheart', 'Red Flash', 'White Queen' and 'Miss Muffet'. Incidentally, 'Miss Muffet', 'Florida Sweetheart' and 'Red Flash' are all sun tolerant. The corms arrived in excellent condition from Bates Sons and Daughters on March 13th. Below are the cultural practices and growing schedule used to produce the 12" baskets and 14" pots of caladiums.

Corms: Jumbo size, no de-eyeing, potted 3/14/02 with 3 per 12" basket or 5 per 14" pot.

The corms were uniformly spaced in the pots approximately 1 inch from the edges. One corm was centered in the 14" pot with the other 4 spaced around it.

Mix: Fafard 3B, corms were covered with 2" of mix.

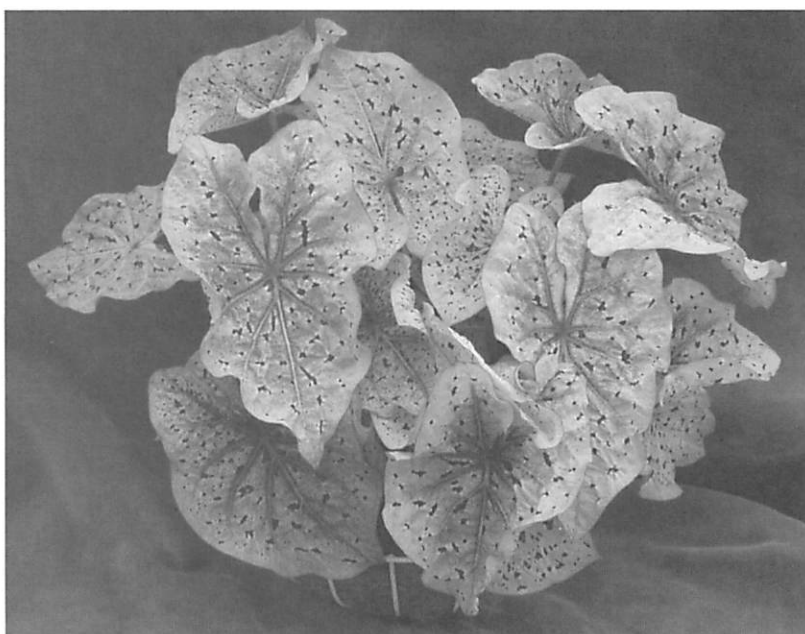
Temperature: Bottom heat 78°F, Air 65°F night.

Some pots remained on bottom heat all season. Others were moved once the leaves had unfolded and were touching an adjacent pot.

Fertilizer: one application of 15-16-17 250 ppm N applied on 4/17/02.

Pesticides: Banrot applied on 4/12/02 as a drench at 8oz/100 gallons of water.

Bench tops were covered with clear plastic and punctured for drainage. Heating cable was spaced 2 inches apart on top of the plastic. Initially pots were spaced pot tight in a single layer. 'Florida Sweetheart' and 'Red Flash' were covered with black plastic for 2 weeks. The plastic was vented every other day. Black plastic was removed from 'Miss Muffet' and 'White



Queen' immediately upon emergence. Sprouting of 'Miss Muffet' occurred 7 days after potting. 'White Queen' started sprouting several days later followed by 'Florida Sweetheart' and last by 'Red Flash'. As bench space became available (6 weeks after potting) pots were spread apart. The most mature plants were moved to a bench without bottom heat to allow for spacing on the heated bench. Finish times were 6 weeks for 'Miss Muffet', 'White Queen' and 'Florida Sweetheart'. 'Red Flash' was saleable in 8 weeks.

Producing the caladiums in large containers was easy with few cultural requirements and somewhat problem free. The black plastic was removed from 'Miss Muffet' and 'White Queen' immediately upon emergence to prevent 'greening'. Banrot was applied as a preventative with no signs of any pathogens. During the first 4 weeks depressions would randomly appear in the mix and often corms were partially exposed. I discovered mice were digging in the pots. They were probably attracted to the residue of rice hulls left on the corms from packing. I never saw any damage to the corms and would simply cover them with more mix. Eventually the plants outgrew the mice!

The only real problem was with loading and delivery. As you can see in the photograph the pots were heavy and difficult to handle more than one at a time. Only a limited number could be transported because of the large size. They would certainly be better suited for a retail grower. However the crop was profitable as a wholesale product.

Wholesale prices were \$14.00 for a 12" baskets and \$20.00 for a 14" pot. Retail prices ranged from \$28.00 to \$40.00.

Both the pots and baskets finished with a showy display of colorful foliage. All four varieties looked spectacular in the 14" containers. 'Miss Muffet' and 'Florida Sweetheart' were better proportioned in the baskets than 'White Queen' and 'Red Flash'. I think 'Red Flash' finished too large for the baskets however customers did not hesitate to purchase them. The 12" baskets and 14" pots sold equally well. Customers were really pleased when their caladiums outlasted other plants during this summer of drought.



Pink Ribbon Poinsettia Presentation at the Governor's Mansion



This past Christmas the NCCFGA presented Pink Ribbon poinsettias to Mrs. Easley. Pictured in the photograph (left to right) are Monica Dunn Wood, NCDA & CS Marketing Specialist, Mrs. Easley, NCCFGA President Susan Rollins, and NCCFGA Executive Director Bonnie Holloman.