

## New Plant Introductions®

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***Brugmansia* 'Miner's Claim' PPAF, angel's trumpet.** This is a new variegated form of 'Frosty Pink' found in our nursery by our Sacramento area sales representative, Keith Miner. It has broad creamy-yellow to ivory-white margins and the same soft, relaxed habit as its parent. Flowers are salmon-pink and seem to initiate under long days. The late afternoon and evening fragrance is intense and relatively light, the same as that of 'Frosty Pink.' But this is a great foliage plant even if it never blooms. We have had endless comments about this plant from those who have seen it in our nursery and it has finally been released.

***Kaempferia grandifolia*, peacock ginger.** This plant is sometimes treated as a species, and is not a hybrid. This is one of the most robust of the peacock gingers. This variety can grow up to 2 ft tall and 3 ft wide, with broadly oval leaves to almost 2 ft long by 8 inches wide forming a basal rosette. The more heat and humidity the faster they emerge and the larger and lusher the leaf. The leaves are slightly curved towards one direction (there is a "front" to each plantlet), margined in olive-green, with darker-green centers banded by nested, concentric, broken-white chevrons. They have a light ginger fragrance when crushed. The undersides are deep burgundy and in this variety the foliage is borne rather erect so the lower coloring is well displayed. It will clump as it grows by new sprouts arising from below ground. Flowers are the largest of the genus, to about 2½ inches across, orchid-like with the sepals forming rear spurs, and are nice deep lavender-pink. It blooms on a short stalk down in the 'V' of the leaves in late summer. Survived well outside in Santa Cruz in the ground in full shade through a wet winter and a cold growing season, but didn't emerge until June. Then a gopher ate it.

Kaempferias, in general, are low-growing, winter-deciduous ginger relatives known for their stunningly colored, heavily V-veined, almost pleated foliage that often resembles that of *Calathea* or *Maranta*. They flower, too, with orchid-like ginger blooms on short stalks at the centers of the rosettes, often looking like they don't belong on the plant. In fact visitors often try to pick the flowers off our plants, assuming they have fallen from the impatiens hanging above.

Members of this genus make outstanding patio, conservatory, or houseplants in areas too cold in winter or summer to grow them outdoors. While listed as being suitable for USDA Zone 8/Sunset Zone 7 and higher, they do best with cool winters, but not hard freezing conditions. Most will take hard freezes without blinking and where situated to be as dry as possible in winter. Many are very winter-rainfall tolerant, grow in part-sun (filtered or diffused) to mostly shade in rich, well-drained soils with regular watering and feeding as needed. Too much sun and the leaves will scald. They need good protection from snails and slugs, but they are worth it, with some of the most highly colored and elegant leaves of any foliage perennial. The genus is native to Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. It is a member of the Zingiberaceae.

***Equisetum myriochaetum*, giant horsetail.** Here it is, one of the amazing giant horsetails I have been looking for for some time now, courtesy of Don Mahoney and

Strybing Arboretum, who I think got it from U.C. Berkeley. To 15 ft tall, you will only see its full height in full sun, with regular watering and feeding, where it is protected from winds strong enough to knock it over, and where it has something to lean on or grow up through. It has large, regular, brushy, whorled branches just like our native stream horsetail, *E. arvense*, not the single unbranched stems of *E. hyemale*. Unlike the winter deciduous stems of temperate species, these culms will live from year to year if not frosted. In dense groves it looks like bamboo.

Found in Central America and northern South America at lower to middle elevations, it needs constant moisture. It will simply die if the roots dry out, whereas the silica-coated stems are very efficient at controlling water loss even under very dry conditions such as Santa Ana winds. As far as invasiveness, the Caribbean species have not been able to invade Florida in spite of spores raining down there for millions of years. Nevertheless if you have a well-sheltered site you plan to plant it in it should probably have a root barrier or be grown in a container. Since *Equisetum* roots have been recorded over 60 ft deep, barriers should either have a bottom or be very, very deep.

Protect it from hard freezes and you should be able to grow it successfully from year to year. Since it may take more than 1 year for the stems to reach full size, freezing to the ground is obviously not something you want to have happen every year.

***Distictis laxiflora*, lavender trumpet vine, vanilla trumpet vine**, is a tender evergreen vine, very fast growing under most conditions but never ultimately as large or vigorous as *D. buccinatoria*. Reportedly it can't take as much frost. The buds are ivory-white with lavender-purple tips, they open to deep, luxuriant, lavender-purple to light royal-purple flowers against the same ivory-white tube, with white throats brushed with pale yellow. They grow to 3 to 4 inches long, 2 inches across the face, in branched clusters of over 20, often to 30 to 40, with three flowers per branchlet. They age to almost white before they fall, for a mixture of purple and white flowers. They have the strong fragrance of white jelly beans (vanilla). It clings by three-clawed tendrils and can climb walls with very little texture. For protected spots in Northern and Central California, or a wider range of conditions in Southern California, it is probably severely damaged or killed below 20 °F without protection. It responds to sun, heat, water, and rich soils. Prune to shape in late winter or early spring. Native to Mexico and a member of the Bignoniaceae.

***Phlox paniculata* 'Flame'**. This is a new series of very dwarf perennial phlox selections, available as dark pink, light pink (salmon-pink with a dark eye), lilac (light violet with a light eye), and purple (a solid violet-magenta). They only get about 12–18 inches tall and have bloomed in late summer or early fall for us, but might be expected to bloom earlier if planted earlier. They are reliably and very strongly mildew/leaf spot resistant, even in our very cool summer climate. I consider them to be the first truly garden worthy garden phlox for West Coast gardens. They are available as plugs from Express Seed.

***Passiflora* 'Allspice'**. This is a seedling of 'Incense'. It differs subtly from its parent by its significantly larger flower and shorter filaments relative to the petals that are darker and banded instead of solidly colored. It is a semi-tender, evergreen vine with hardy roots, fast growth, and spectacular flowers. It dies to the ground with hard frost (below about 25 °F) but sprouts up thick and fast from root sprouts, often coming up some distance from the crown, and will survive well below 20 °F

as a deciduous vine. It is very fast with sun, water, and heat. Foliage is somewhat sparse compared to varieties like 'Coral Seas' and growth is much more open. The flowers are usually about 4 inches across, lavender petals reflex slightly with a dense crown of undulating, rich purple filaments banded white and dark purple. They smell very sweet and produce typical nectar. Yet another plant to drive your hummingbirds crazy with joy! 'Incense' itself was reportedly developed for its fruit and that is what the name refers to. I haven't been able to confirm this report and haven't seen the fruit of it or 'Allspice' fruit yet myself. The original 'Incense' is very susceptible to Carla virus, which is rampant in cultivated passionflowers and usually leads to some sort of foliage discoloration. In 'Incense' large golden spots appear and vigor is low in infected clones. 'Allspice' is either free of that particular virus or relatively resistant.

***Bartlettina sordida***. An amazing foliage plant, from the cloud forests of highland southern Mexico (Chiapas, Veracruz, Oaxaca), this very fast grower bears soft, dark lime-green, heart-shaped leaves up to 2 ft long by 18 inches wide in opposite pairs on robust upright stems. These leaves have purplish veins, can be deeply quilted, show prominent relief on the undersides, and are often tinged purple or reddish on the upper surfaces by cold or sunlight. It can grow quickly to 10 ft unpruned and if not frosted back in winter. In my yard it bears its flowers in late spring or early summer, 6- to 10-inch-wide clusters of light lavender-purple flowers that greatly resemble a giant version of *Ageratum*. Others (who probably are less focused on the foliage effect and undoubtedly cut their plants back less) report it as blooming in fall also. I would suspect it to be a facultative (or cumulative) short-day plant, based on its area of origin and the flowering pattern of other plants found with it. I first saw an amazing example of this plant in full bloom at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens in 1989 and had been searching for it ever since. I was finally able to get a piece from Strybing Arboretum. I have this planted in the front of my two-story Craftsman home and get more comments and questions about this plant from passersby and visitors than anything else in my garden. People are strongly attracted to its striking, velvety appearing foliage and overall appearance. To grow it well it needs part shade to mostly shade, average soils and protection from hard freezes. It is reasonably drought tolerant when established, especially with good, thick, coarse surface mulch, but the leaves are correspondingly smaller and the plant is stemmier. It is happiest and most spectacular with at least average to regular watering. It likes cool, foggy summers but if shaded it should do well in Sunset Zones 8–9, 15–16 (all with good protection), 17, and 21–24. It is a member of the Compositae/Asteraceae family.

***Begonia carolineifolia***. This begonia is a stunning foliage plant, with dark-green palmate leaves and coppery undersides and stems. To about 2 ft tall, its long, sinister, pointed, serrated, claw-like leaflets hang down to 10 inches for a wonderful tropical effect, though it is actually listed as root hardy to USDA Zone 9/Sunset Zone 8. It greatly resembles the larger, very magnificent *B. luxurians* except instead of being a tender shrub it grows as a stemless or prostrate perennial, bearing its huge leaves on long, robust upright petioles. This species will also probably do best with some rain protection in winter. It is wonderful in containers, mixed plant-

ings, or with other foliage plants. Small, white flowers appear in upright-branched sprays in spring. This begonia likes shading, water, fertilizer. Doesn't like snails, but snails like it!

***Aeschynanthus garrettii*, hardy lipstick plant.** This stoloniferous form sends vertical branches to 2 ft tall. It grows, blooms, and spreads vigorously, has typical neat, dark-green leaves against dark stems and bright red lipstick flowers. Its roots form a deep mat of stolons and it often sends new plants up from the bottom drain holes of even 5-gal containers. It was undamaged at 30 °F when another "outdoor" gesneriad form and other tender subtropicals such as *Brugmansia* were killed to the ground. Given its robust stoloniferous habit and summer to fall bloom time, this might prove to be useful across the country. It should tolerate being frozen to ground level, being able to simply regrow by summer, in time to provide months of color. It is native to a section of Thailand that also hosts other hardy "tropical" perennials such as *Curcuma*, *Hedychium*, and *Kaempferia*. This hot-summer, winter-deciduous hardwood forest is a hotbed of new plant discoveries, along with Vietnam and southern China, with many new species and forms entering the trade from these regions. It is a member of the Gesneriaceae.

***Erythrina humeana*, Natal coral tree.** Arguably the best of the really showy subtropical coral trees for use in Northern California. This is one of my all-time favorite plants. A deciduous (at least in California) tree to about 20 ft, it is usually seen as a multitrunked specimen. Tall unbranched flower spikes, to 2 ft in length, bear ranks of bright lipstick orange-red flowers to about 3 inches long. Flower stalks are held well above the foliage canopy. Any wood produced during very long days seems to initiate. Flowering usually commences in July and can last well into winter. Leaves are very large and open, divided into three long-tipped leaflets. Trunks, stems, and petioles are thorny. Full sun is preferred, but can be grown in at least half a day of sun. It needs at least average drainage and as little frost as possible. Overhead protection is almost always needed in northern California, and it should be sited facing west, south, or east. Makes a good, but large, container plant. In all situations, it is relatively drought tolerant but water as needed. The form in California is thought to actually be a hybrid with *E. princeps*, and in support of that theory I have never seen it set seed. It is possible this tree is showier in Northern California. It tends to be winter dormant, then the branches all break growth together and initiate flower spikes at the same time, leading to one massive flower show. In Southern California it is more or less evergreen and everblooming but tends to have one very long but rather light display. Pollarding it back once in January or February might help to improve the flower display there. South Africa.