UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

UF/IFAS PEER REVIEWED HS1537
doi.org/10.32473/EDIS-HS1537-2026

Juicy Gossip™ and Passion Punch™ Caladiums for Florida Landscapes and Containers[1]

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Introduction

Caladiums are ornamental aroid plants valued for their colorful foliage and versatility in both container and landscape use. Florida is the primary producer of caladium tubers (or bulbs) in the world, supplying tubers to greenhouse growers, nurseries, landscapers, retailers, and gardeners nationwide and worldwide. Continued demand for improved cultivars has driven breeding efforts to develop new cultivars with enhanced visual appeal, better plant performance, and improved resistance to diseases and pests. This publication introduces two new caladium cultivars developed by the caladium breeding program at the UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (GCREC): Juicy Gossip™ (released under the name 'UF-15-131', Figures 1 and 2) and Passion Punch™ (released as 'UF-15-627', Figure 3). This fact sheet is intended for commercial caladium tuber producers, greenhouse and nursery growers, landscape professionals, Extension agents, and home gardeners interested in caladium production and use.



Figure 1. Juicy Gossip™ grown in an 8-inch container in a temperature-controlled greenhouse in Wimauma, Florida, in 2019.
Credit: K. Druffel, UF/IFAS.



Figure 2. Juicy Gossip™ grown on mulched raised beds in full sun in Wimauma, Florida, in 2019.
Credit: Z. Deng, UF/IFAS.



Figure 3. Passion Punch™ grown on mulched raised beds in full sun in Wimauma, Florida, in 2021.
Credit: Z. Deng, UF/IFAS.

Origin

Juicy Gossip™ resulted from a cross made in Wimauma, Florida, in summer 2012 (Deng et al. 2026) between UF 317 and 'Florida Fantasy' (Wilfret 1991a). UF 317 is a proprietary line from the UF/IFAS caladium breeding program, originating from a cross between 'Florida

Sweetheart' (Wilfret 1991b) and 'Miss Muffet' that was made in Bradenton, Florida, in 2003.

Passion Punch™ originated from a cross made in Wimauma, Florida, in summer 2012 (Deng et al. 2026) between 'Red Hot' and the proprietary line UF 4201. 'Red Hot' (plant patent PP25,598) was progeny of 'Florida Sweetheart' and 'Red Flash' (Deng et al. 2013), while UF 4201 was from a cross between 'Florida Moonlight' (Miranda and Harbaugh 2003) and 'Florida Sweetheart'.

Both cultivars were selected from breeding populations based on their attractive foliage, plant growth characteristics, and performance under greenhouse and field conditions. Following initial selection, these cultivars were propagated vegetatively through tuber division and evaluated over multiple years in container and field trials. Consistent performance and stable characteristics were observed during repeated propagation cycles, leading to their release as new cultivars in October 2024 for landscape and container use.

Plant Description

Juicy Gossip™

Plants are medium in size, typically reaching approximately 15 inches in height and 20 to 22 inches in width when grown in 6-inch containers. Leaves are heart-shaped, with black-brown petioles attached to the back. They are medium to large in size and exhibit a white-to-light-green background color, accented with numerous red spots across the leaf surface. Plants produce a balanced canopy with an attractive, full appearance.

Passion Punch™

Plants typically reach approximately 16 inches in height and up to 24 inches in width when grown in 6-inch containers. Leaves are lance-shaped, with the petiole attached to the base. They display a complex blend of red, pink, green, and white colorations. Fully expanded leaves are up to 10 inches in length and 8 inches in width.

Container Performance

Both cultivars have been evaluated for performance in container production under greenhouse conditions in Florida. Standard production practices, including the use of commercial potting substrates, controlled-release fertilizers, and partial shade, were used during evaluations.

Juicy Gossip™

This cultivar produced well-shaped, symmetrical plants with a moderate number of leaves. Individual leaves were relatively large (8 to 10 inches long and 6 to 8 inches wide) (Table 1), contributing to an attractive overall plant form. Potted plants consistently received high-quality ratings and were comparable to established commercial cultivars commonly used for container production (Table 1). Juicy Gossip™ tended to have fewer but larger leaves than 'Cranberry Star' (Deng et al. 2008), which shares a similar coloration pattern with Juicy Gossip™.

Passion Punch™

This cultivar produced fewer leaves than 'Florida Sweetheart'; however, the leaves were significantly larger, resulting in a bold and striking plant appearance (Table 1). Since the plant is larger in size, a wider spacing between containers is recommended during production. For small container sizes, such as 5-inch pots or smaller, tuber de-eyeing may be beneficial for encouraging the development of multiple leaves and improving plant fullness.

Landscape Performance

Field evaluations were conducted under full-sun conditions in Florida over multiple growing seasons to assess plant growth, leaf color display, sunburn tolerance, and overall plant health.

Juicy Gossip™

This cultivar demonstrated good-to-excellent performance in landscape settings. Plants maintained attractive foliage color and structure throughout the growing season. Compared with similar cultivars, Juicy Gossip™ exhibited improved tolerance to sunburn and better leaf health (Table 2), resulting in more consistent visual quality under high light conditions.

Passion Punch™

This cultivar performed well in full sun and produced vibrant foliage with strong color retention. It showed improved tolerance to sunlight exposure compared with cultivars known to experience color fading or leaf burn (Table 3). The larger leaves and bold coloration provided strong visual impact in landscape plantings, especially when used as a focal plant or in mass plantings.

Disease Considerations in Field Tuber Production

Caladium tuber (bulb) production in the field can be affected by Fusarium tuber rot (*Fusarium solani*), Pythium root rot (*Pythium myriotylum*), and root-knot nematodes (*Meloidogyne arenaria* and *M. javanica*). Evaluations of Juicy Gossip™ and Passion Punch™ indicated differences in their relative susceptibility to these issues.

Juicy Gossip™

This cultivar showed resistance or moderate resistance to Fusarium tuber rot and moderate resistance to root-knot nematodes. It also exhibited moderate resistance to Pythium root rot under test conditions.

Passion Punch™

This cultivar showed resistance to Fusarium tuber rot. However, it may be susceptible to Pythium root rot and moderately susceptible to root-knot nematodes. Growers should implement appropriate cultural practices to reduce disease risk.

Recommendations for Greenhouse Growers and Nurseries

- Use wider plant spacing for Passion Punch™ to accommodate its larger growth habit.
- Consider tuber de-eyeing when producing small container plants, particularly for Passion Punch™.
- Maintain well-drained growing media and avoid overwatering to reduce the risk of Pythium root rot.

Recommendations for Landscapers and Home Gardeners

- Plant in locations receiving full sun to partial shade.
- Use well-drained soil or raised beds to minimize disease issues.
- Water regularly to maintain consistent soil moisture.
- Apply a balanced fertilizer to support growth.
- Use Juicy Gossip™ in mixed beds, borders, and containers.
- Use Passion Punch™ as a focal plant or in areas where large, colorful foliage is desired.

Summary

Juicy Gossip™ and Passion Punch™ are new caladium cultivars developed by UF/IFAS to provide improved performance for both commercial growers and home gardeners.

Juicy Gossip™ shares a similar growth habit with ‘Cranberry Star’ in containers and in the ground, but this new cultivar has demonstrated improved plant growth, sunburn tolerance, and leaf health in field trials. Juicy Gossip™ produces high-quality plants in containers and performs well in full sun. Unlike ‘Cranberry Star’, Juicy Gossip™ has dark brown to black petioles and red spots on its leaves. Juicy Gossip™ is well-suited for forcing in containers, producing potted plants, and planting in a range of landscapes.

Passion Punch™ is a new member of the novel caladium cultivar group represented by ‘Passionista’ (released under ‘UF-4015’; Deng et al. 2015), which was released in 2014. Passion Punch™ provides large, striking foliage and excellent performance under shady and sunny conditions.

Together, these cultivars expand the range of high-quality options available for caladium production and use in Florida and similar environments.

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Tables

Table 1. Plant height and width, leaf number, leaf length and width, and plant quality ratings of Juicy Gossip™, Passion Punch™, and two commercial caladium cultivars (checks) grown in small containers.

Cultivars	Plant height (in)	Plant width (in)	Leaves (no.)	Leaf length (in)	Leaf width (in)	Plant quality rating
Juicy Gossip™	15.3	20.9	15	10.2	7.3	4.5
Cranberry Star	13.7	21.9	20	9.0	6.5	4.5
Passion Punch™	16.0	23.5	11	10.9	7.6	3.3
Florida Sweetheart	9.5	18.8	21	8.1	5.9	4.2

No. 1-sized tubers (1.5–2.5 inches in diameter) were de-eyed, planted in 6-inch containers (one tuber per container), and then grown in a shaded, temperature-controlled greenhouse in Wimauma, Florida, in 2024.

Values represent the means of six plants with a single No. 1 tuber planted per container.

Quality of the potted caladium plants was rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very poor, unattractive, and totally unacceptable as potted plants with few leaves and 5 being very attractive, full plants with a symmetrical shape, an appropriate height, and many bright, colorful leaves.

Table 2. Plant growth, leaf color, sunburn tolerance, and leaf health ratings of Juicy Gossip™ and commercial caladium cultivar 'Cranberry Star' (check) grown in ground beds in full sun in Wimauma, Florida, in 2020 and 2021.

Characteristics	Cultivars	2020			2021		
		July	Aug.	Sept.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Plant growth	Juicy Gossip™	1.8	2.2	3.7	3.2	4.0	4.0
	Cranberry Star	1.8	2.0	2.4	3.0	3.7	3.2
Leaf color	Juicy Gossip™	2.2	2.8	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.0
	Cranberry Star	2.5	3.2	2.4	3.0	2.0	2.0
Sunburn tolerance	Juicy Gossip™	4.3	4.3	3.9	4.2	3.7	4.0
	Cranberry Star	3.5	4.0	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.0
Leaf health	Juicy Gossip™	4.2	4.3	3.8	4.0	3.7	2.7
	Cranberry Star	3.7	3.8	1.8	3.0	1.3	1.0

Plant growth, leaf color, sunburn tolerance, and leaf health were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent. These characteristics were evaluated on July 31, August 21, and September 25, 2020, as well as August 20, September 22, and October 13, 2021.

Table 3. Plant growth, leaf color, sunburn tolerance, and leaf health ratings of Passion Punch™ and commercial caladium cultivar 'Florida Sweetheart' (check) grown in ground beds in full sun in Wimauma, Florida, in 2019 and 2021.

Characteristics	Cultivars	2019			2021		
		July	Aug.	Sept.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Plant growth	Passion Punch™	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.7	3.3	3.0
	Florida Sweetheart	2.8	3.0	1.7	2.3	4.3	4.3
Leaf color	Passion Punch™	3.7	4.2	2.7	3.8	3.7	3.7
	Florida Sweetheart	3.0	3.5	1.8	3.5	2.7	2.7
Sunburn tolerance	Passion Punch™	2.5	3.7	2.3	4.0	3.3	3.7
	Florida Sweetheart	4.2	3.8	2.0	3.7	2.7	3.3
Leaf health	Passion Punch™	4.0	4.3	5.0	4.3	4.0	3.7
	Florida Sweetheart	4.2	3.7	4.0	4.2	3.7	4.0

Plant growth, leaf color, sunburn tolerance, and leaf health were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent. These characteristics were evaluated on July 13, August 13, and September 18, 2019, as well as August 20, September 22, and October 13, 2021.

[1] This document is HS1537, one of a series of the Department of Horticultural Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 2026. Visit the Ask IFAS website at https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/ for the currently supported version of this publication. © 2026 UF/IFAS. This publication is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

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