

Abstract:

The new crop program at the University of Georgia (UGA) consists of plant evaluation and new crop introduction. The definition of “new crop” used in the program is taxa that are new to the floriculture/landscape industry. New introductions are first evaluated in the greenhouse for ease of propagation and placed in the trial gardens the subsequent spring. In the past, commercial growers were allowed to gather cuttings of new material and sell them under the names given to the new plant. The market determined the success or failure of the plant. Examples of successful plants which resulted from this “Open Grower” concept included Verbena ‘Homestead Purple’, Ipomoea batatas ‘Margarita’, and new selections of Solenostemon (coleus). No charge for cuttings was applied and no funding returned to the department. However, an excellent working relationship between the department and industry developed. In order to provide funding for the program and the department, a program was initiated by members of the industry to introduce, clean, propagate, disseminate and sell new crops designated by the UGA program. The program was called Athens Select and is in its third year of marketing. The industry is solely responsible for promotion and marketing of the crops, the department acts as a trial site and selection location. Over one million cuttings have been sold as of 2002.