

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Another Blue Flower Story

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Why can't people just be happy with delphiniums? But no, we have to find a way to make blue the flowers that aren't naturally blue—and according to a story by Gizmodo, less than 10% of the world's 280,000 flowers are naturally that way.

In yet another attempt to rectify that situation, scientists at Japan's National Agriculture and Food Research Organization have created what they say is the first blue chrysanthemum. They accomplished the task by inserting blue-expressing genes from two other flowers, butterfly peas (*Clitoria ternatea*) and Canterbury bells (*Campanula medium*). The resulting blue color was the work of "co-pigmentation" they discovered, an intra-flower chemical interaction that they hope they can use to turn other popular flowers blue.

In light of the recent orange petunia situation, one has to ask: Is this technically a genetically engineered organism—at least by USDA or European standards? They didn't like it when we put corn genes into petunias—will they be okay with campanula and clitoria genes in a mum? If so, great! If not, it will cost a ton of dollars—maybe several tons—to get such a product approved by government authorities in any country where it's produced or sold.

Which means it will most likely remain a laboratory novelty rather than a commercial cash-cow. **GT**