

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Star Pattern on Calibrachoa Now Patented

Chris Beytes

You know the pretty star pattern on such calibrachos as Superbells Cherry Star? Unromantically classified as a “radially symmetric pattern,” that flower pattern is now protected by a U.S. utility patent issued April 19, 2016. Proven Winners, the first plant seller to offer a calibrachoa featuring that pattern, has been granted the first license for it by the patent-holder, a breeding company called Plant 21.

Proven Winners released the news just before Spring Trials to broker representatives and every breeder known to produce calibrachoa.

Creation of that star pattern is credited to Japanese breeder Ushio Sakazaki of Plant 21 of Japan and Bonsall, California. The former Suntory breeder first discovered it in his seedlings in 2006. He went on to develop Superbells Salmon Star, Cherry Star and three other Superbells, including two new ones for 2017, Hollywood Star and Morning Star.

Plant 21 has a tight relationship with Proven Winners, which is why they were granted the U.S. rights to the star pattern. In addition, at press time, both Ball FloraPlant and Selecta One have license agreements in the works so they can continue offering their star-pattern calibrachos. However, these agreements are not yet final. We were told that this was somewhat of a reciprocal arrangement, as both companies have genetics that Plant 21 would like to add to its line.

What does that mean for other breeders that have calibrachos sporting this star pattern? Well, they won't be able to sell it in the U.S. without a license. Nor will Canadian growers be able to ship it south to the U.S., which is not uncommon—we've seen the same restrictions with double calibrachos and black petunias, to name two.

Westhoff is one of several breeders that offers calibrachos with the star pattern, so we reached out to them for comment. Chris Berg, their North American agent, said they've already acted.

“We have taken our Caliplosions off the market for North America. We had two varieties, it was Caliplosion Red and Caliplosion Purple,” explained Chris. “And honestly, there were not that many sold, so it was no big

deal.”

He added that they’d had some stars in their Celebration series, but those had been discontinued even before the patent. **GT**