

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Syngenta to Launch IDM-Resistant Impatiens at Spring Trials

Chris Beytes

It's called Imara XDR and it will be the first impatiens downy mildew-resistant impatiens to get a full launch into the U.S. market, at Syngenta's California Spring Trials exhibit in March.

Imara XDR will be competing with PanAmerican Seed's Beacon Impatiens, which is getting a soft launch in 2019 and a full launch in 2020.

Scott Valentine, Syngenta's top guy in the Flowers division, confirmed the news above, adding that they launched it in Europe this past spring for the UK (which was very hard hit by IDM).

"We have full commercial production of seed in the bag—the product is ready to go!" he stated.

As for where the name "Imara" comes from? It's Swahili for "strength and resilience," he says.

Olivia Sellards, Syngenta's Customer Marketing Manager, employed the classic surfer term "stoked" to describe Syngenta's enthusiasm for their new product.

First, a couple of definitions: XDR means "extra disease resistance." To be labeled XDR, the genetics must be proven to be resistant to whatever disease they're labeling it for, as verified through rigorous testing in multiple settings and situations. And the disease resistance has to be independently verified by third-party experts.

Second, how is Syngenta classifying Imara XDR's resistance abilities? PanAmerican Seed is saying Beacon Impatiens has "high resistance" to IDM based upon a technical designation approved by the International Seed Federation (ISF).

Olivia also used the term "highly resistant," but didn't go so far as to reference ISF. She did say that Cornell pathologist Margery Daughtrey, one of the independent testers, has classified Imara that way.

Via email, Margery confirmed that, writing: "I am comfortable with calling the Imara XDR Impatiens 'highly resistant' because not only were the symptoms and signs measurably (statistically) lower than those of the highly susceptible plants they were compared to, but the plants also looked good to the naked eye rather than collapsing from downy mildew."

Margery said she made quality ratings weekly on Imara XDR impatiens exposed to downy mildew: they maintained their foliage and flowers throughout two replicated trials in which susceptible "control" cultivars defoliated and melted away. She says she made sure that the disease pressure was high by putting infected plants into the area to

provide airborne inoculum, supplying overhead irrigation twice a day and giving plants 50% shade to provide conditions favorable to disease development.

Said Margery, “Good performance by an impatiens under those conditions was exciting to see. The plants were not immune to the pathogen, but they held up very well in its presence—they are highly resistant.”

Details on the variety

With the all-important IDM-resistance question answered, what about Imara XDR as an impatiens series? Well, answered Olivia, Imara is all-new breeding, not just a sport or selection of an existing series. Senior Flower Breeder Ton Groot says it was 2011 when he found the plant that all the work is based on.

Olivia says Imara is most similar in habit to Accent Premium, Syngenta’s long-running series that came through the Goldsmith acquisition. Imara will start with seven colors and a mix; as many as three more colors will be added by Spring Trials 2019.

The variety was bred in the Netherlands; seed production is taking place in Guatemala. Some growers are already doing production trials. Imara’s public debut will take place at Costa Farms’ Season Premier Trial. After that, you’ll see it at Spring Trials and all the summer shows. There will be loads of educational information and promotional activities associated with the launch. And Syngenta assured there’s plenty of seed in the bag to meet demand.

As for cost, Olivia says there will be a “slight” price premium over regular *I. walleriana*, but it doesn’t sound like it will be objectionable.

“We’re pricing it so that it’s economical to grow,” she says. “We want people to bring back impatiens ... our tagline for this product is: ‘Take back the shade!’” **GT**



Imara XDR Orange



Imara XDR White



Imara XDR Purple



Leading Non-Resistant Competitor Orange



Leading Non-Resistant Competitor White



Leading Non-Resistant Competitor Violet

The top shows IDM-resistant Imara Impatiens in Cornell trials, where they were exposed to diseased plants for two months. The bottom are the non-resistant competitors that were exposed to the same conditions.