

# GROWERTALKS

## GT in Brief

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## Orange Petunia Update

*Chris Beytes*

We call it the orange petunia situation because that's the color that started the genetically engineered ball rolling, but it's extended into a few other colors, with the update of USDA's list of petunia varieties published May 25 under the following heading:

"The following petunia varieties require a U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) import authorization, APHIS Form 2000, under BRS regulations at 7 CFR part 340."

- African Sunset
- Bonnie Orange (known as Starlet Orange in North America)
- Capella Red
- Cascadias Red Lips
- Colorworks Homarez
- Confetti Garden Tangerine Tango
- Confetti Garden Twist
- Fortunia Early Orange
- Go!Tunia Orange
- Headliner Electric Orange, also known as Famous Electric Orange
- Hells Bells Improved
- KwikKombo Color My Sunset
- KwikKombo Orange Twist
- Pegasus Orange
- Pegasus Table Orange
- Perfectunia Mandarin
- Perfectunia Orange
- Potunia Plus Papaya
- Salmon Ray, also known as Pegasus Orange Morn
- Sanguna Salmon
- Starlet Red, also known as Bonnie Red 14
- Supertunia Raspberry Blast, also known as Hoobini Pink
- Supertunia Rose Blast Charm, also known as Mini Rose Blast
- Sweetunia Orange Flash

Trilogy '76 Mix—Liberty Mix  
Trilogy Deep Purple  
Trilogy Formula Mix  
Trilogy Mango  
Trilogy Red  
Whispers Orange, also known as Dekko Orange

Note the addition of two Supertunias, which are not orange (nor are a few of the Trilogy petunias on the list).

## The story of how this all started

When *GrowerTalks* broke the news a few weeks ago, we'd done enough research to know that the orange petunia originated at the Max Planck Institute in Germany around 1986 or so. (At least one blogger, not having read our piece or done a bit of Googling, speculated that it was a chance crossing due to corn pollen being blown into a petunia crop).

Kelly Servick, a writer at *Science* magazine, took the time to do the legwork and has gotten to the bottom, more or less, of how the genetically engineered orange petunia went from lab to greenhouse, starting with S&G Seeds, which licensed the technology from the Institute. The story also outlines the accidental discovery of the genetically engineered nature of the petunias in Finland by a plant biologist at a train station in Helsinki.

The details pretty much confirm that the whole incident was an accident—truly, nobody was aware the plants they were selling contained genes from corn. It doesn't alter the fact that we can't sell those plants now without having them deregulated by the USDA. We can only assume that's the next step for breeders. **GT**