

# *The Codiaeum Connection*

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2

November 2006

## **crotons in the Philippines**

*Magnificent*





## *A Message to the Members:*

The new calendar year for the Croton Society will be November 2006. All members have received their renewal notices either by email or mail and should send in your dues as soon as possible. Only current members will receive the 2007 calendar. Additional calendars are also available to purchase as gifts. The cost for domestic members is \$20.00 and \$25.00 for International members which includes shipping and handling. Our calendar features very special photos of Nita and JR Renfroe Hybrids.

Winter is coming to Florida. Although it is predicted that we will be having an El Niño winter with more rain and warmer temperatures, it is best to play it on the safe. Fertilize with a 2-10-10 and be prepared to protect your babies. See Ron's article on page 3 of this newsletter for more information.

In this edition, we have included a current Croton Society membership list. To respect the privacy of all our members, our past practice was to only published the name, city of residence, phone number and email address. Members at the last meeting expressed a desire to have complete addresses included in this membership list. Those members who would like their complete address published, please fill out and return the enclosed form. We will publish the complete address of only those members who return this form to us.

Crotons  
On  
Display

Announcing:

### **FLORIDA STATE FAIR**

February 8—19, 2007

### **Family Living Competition**

Volunteer  
To help!

The Croton Society, once again, has the opportunity to participate in the Florida State Fair Horticulture display competition. We need **YOU** to volunteer for this creative challenge. Please call or email us **BEFORE December 15, 2006** if interested. You can call Connie @ 813-968-9689 or email [choerstg@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:choerstg@tampabay.rr.com).



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- Indoor & Patio Plants • Fruit Trees
- Herbs & Vegetables • Fertilizers
- Cactus & Succulents • Mulches



## Putting the Babies to Bed

By Dr. Ron Parlett

Is it a labor of love or is it a costly pain in the .....? In either case it is something that must be done at the beginning of December to protect the shared collection of approximately 400 croton cultivars located in North Tampa. Crotons are a tropical plant that is subject to serious foliage damage or even death due to cold damage. Some crotons suffer once temperatures drop below 40 degrees and once it hits 32 degrees, it is only a matter of how long a duration of this temperature or lower that crotons will take a hit.

Over the last 10 years, the winters have been mild with temperatures dropping below 32 degrees for a very brief period. However, I have seen temperatures as low as 16 degrees, and remaining below 32 for over a 24 hour period. Needless to say, many plants and trees were lost. The possibility is real each year, so precautions must be taken.

Each year, wood framing for the greenhouse must be put up to support the 4 mil clear plastic, which covers the long stretches of crotons. This project is not an easy task, as each area must be sealed up to make a mini greenhouse over the plants. The hardest part is ensuring that the greenhouse structure is able to withstand the heavy winter rain, delivered by cold fronts. These rain storms are usually preceded by strong winds capable of tearing the plastic to shreds. It is not uncommon to occasionally make emergency repairs in the middle of the night or first thing in the morning knowing that the temperature will be dropping during the day.

Once the crotons are safely tucked away, several 155,000 BTU cannon heaters, each holding 10 gallons of reserve fuel and thermostatically controlled are in place for temperatures dropping below the mid 20s. Also, as a fail safe, a programmed sprinkler system which is supplied by well water, keeps the temperature in the greenhouse at a constant 72 degrees and the plants moist. The average winter temperature in this Tampa greenhouse from December through March is a pleasant 72 degrees. However, it only takes one cold night with heavy winds and rain to ruin it all. When the plastic is removed on April 1, the results are healthy growing crotons.

This process of protecting our crotons has enabled us to have the world's largest "**northern**" most collection of crotons. This distinction has not been an easy one over the years. So I guess you would have to say it is a labor of love.



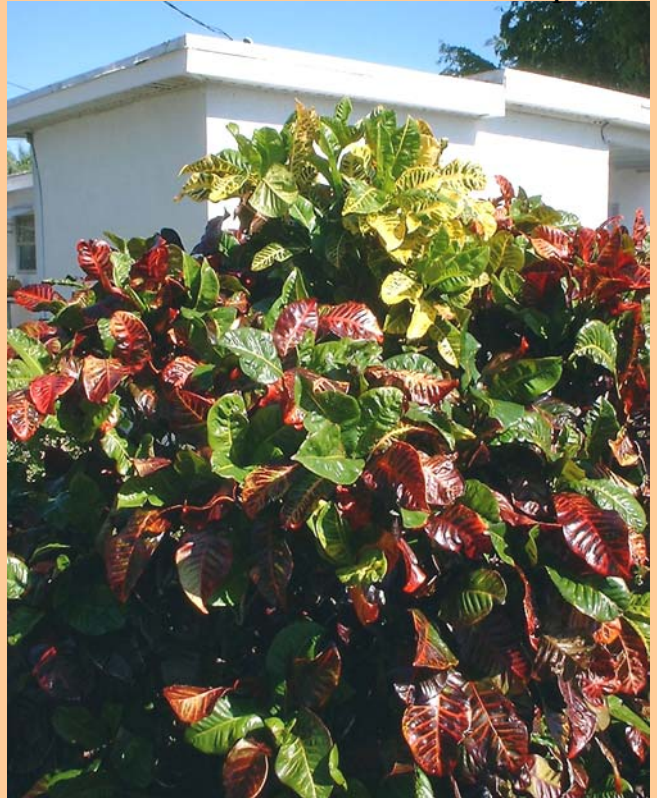


# Codiaeum Sports We Love

Nestor with Yellow Sport



Gloriosa with White Gloriosa Sport



Kentucky with White Sport



Andreanum with Yellow Andreanum

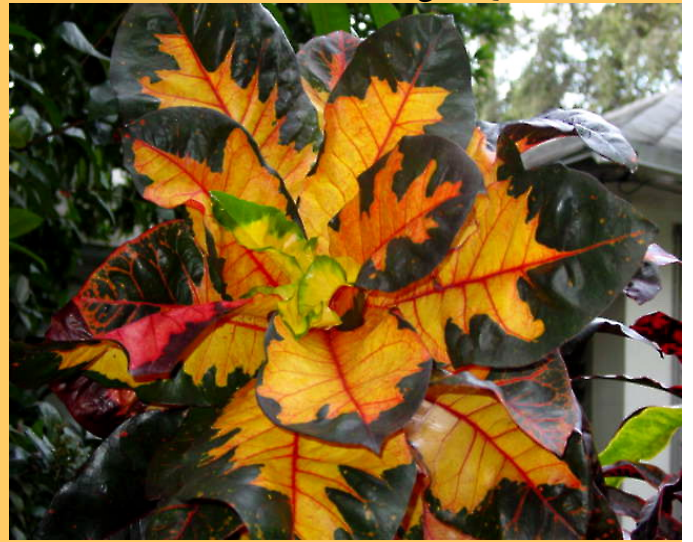




Jungle Queen



Blotched Jungle Queen



Aureo Maculatum



Aureo Sport (Un-Named)



Carot



Blotched Carot Sport





Duke of Windsor



Duke of Windsor with Yellow Sport



Pitcarin



Pitcarin Sport (Veined)



Sybil Griffin



Sybil Griffin Yellow Sport





Johanna Coppinger



Johanna Coppinger Yellow Sport



Nestor



Nestor Sport (Glen Roof)



William Jennings Bryant



William Jennings Bryant Sport





Mammy



Mammy Sport (Nancy in the trade)



Yellow Mammy



Yellow Manny Sport





## CROTONS OF LOS BANOS

By: National Scientist: Benito S. Vergara

We live in Los Banos, a university town at the foot of Mt. Makiling. It is known in the old days, and until now, for the many hot spring resorts. The University of the Philippines Los Banos and several international institutions are located in this science city. Croton are common in this town.

Ornamental plants, as an industry, started on the same road where our house is. With the annual and later biannual garden shows at the university campus, which started in the early sixties, more and more local town people started growing ornamentals for sale. Ornamental plant nurseries sprouted along the highway approaching Los Banos from the north and the south. Los Banos became a popular hunting ground for plant hobbyists and people in the landscape business.

The frequent travels of the scientists from the university and adjoining international institution added new cultivars to the town. People throughout the Philippines came to the garden shows for new plants. During the Garden shows, the people from the mountains brought down with them wild plants for sale. Several new species of Hoya, pitcher plant, Aglaonema and orchids were first seen at the shows. All these probably explain the rich ornamental flora of Los Banos. The popular Mussaenda "Doan Aurora" came from the breeding work at Los Banos.

San Francisco is the common name of Crotons in the Philippines.



E.D. Merrill reported that crotons were already cultivated in the Philippines around 1880. During the visit of Frank Brown to the Philippines during the late fifties, he listed more than 19 popular cultivars. We have only three croton cultivars in our garden, but a variety of crotons are growing in the university campus.

One weekend, my granddaughter Issa and I decided to take some photos of the colorful foliage of crotons. We were surprised in seeing more than 20 cultivars in 2 days. It was fun comparing our photos with those in Franks Browns's book to identify the plants—and exciting when the picture was not in the book. That started our journey in this colorful plant with unending permutations of colors and shapes. Sports were seen in several cultivars.

We started getting cuttings to propagate, then buying from the nurseries in Los Banos. Before we knew it, we had 30 cultivars in our garden. Our weekend forage brought us to a neighboring town known for mass production of common crotons. We ended up buying several beautiful, robust unknowns.



I thought I had visited all the possible nurseries with crotons until I revisited the nursery of the late Eli Bardenas (page 115 in the book of F. Brown). This time, I saw several cultivars brought in from Guam. Some have truly spectacular leaves in terms of color.



Large planting of Stoplight, Johanna Coppinger, Irene Kingsley and Interruptum are found in the campus. A close look at these mass plantings will invariably come up with a sport or variation.

My favorite crotons? They are not listed in Dr. Brown's book. Foremost, is what I believe is a sport of Charmer. The most delicate croton leaves I have seen, light green at the base and almost yellow at the top, margins wavy, dark green in mature leaves. The leaf blade is sprinkled with dark green dots near the midrib.

The second outstanding croton in our town has bright yellow, narrow, twisted leaves. The young leaves are all yellow and look like a fountain of gold. The matured green leaves are smeared irregularly with yellow.

The third choice, is a sport of Johanna Coppinger. The young leaves are pure bright yellows. Mature leaves have prominent yellow midrib with a fine red line in the middle. No yellow spotting on the leaves unlike Johanna Coppinger.

Several cultivars have small leaves and have potentials as potted plants. The cultivars found in Los Banos will be published as a book in early 2007. I hope this will help the hobbyists to identify their plants properly and the plant nursery and landscape people reduce the confusions when selling or ordering plants.







*Terry & Spring Seeley, Proprietors*

# **50+ VARIETIES OF CROTONS**

**Croton Connection<sup>™</sup> of South Florida**

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