

Plant of the Month

Well, it's time again to share my latest obsession with you all. My new favorite plant is the passionflower. I've discovered since my decision to start breeding them that there are over 470 species and 150 named hybrids. Surprisingly, there are only 4 or 5 seen with any regularity in



Florida gardens. The most common around here are the red passionflower, *Passiflora coccinea*, which has no fragrance and produces no fruit without manual cross-pollination; and the native maypop or its vigorous offspring, *Passiflora 'incense'*, which is fragrant, but still produces no fruit. *Incense* and the maypop are also the favorite food of the gulf fritillary butterfly, which



alarms many gardeners when they see the caterpillars devouring every last leaf on the vine. Not to worry; the vine is indestructible, and the butterflies are beautiful. Most nurseries also carry the purple passionfruit, *P. edulis*, which produces lots of delicious fruit, but no fragrance, and not much color in the flowers.

In my garden, I leave *incense* to the butterflies, and the other species are all for me. When it



comes to choosing varieties, I want it all: vigorous growth, and delicious what I hope to my hybrids. existing cultivars these criteria



fragrance, color, fruit; and this is produce in all Some of the which meet and thrive in



Florida's climate are: the giant granadilla, *Passiflora quadrangularis*, and its close relatives, *P. macrocarpa* 'Warmlands', *P. actinia* and *P. alata*.

Looking for a quick screen from the neighbors? Most *Passiflora* species will cover 60 feet of fence in a year, and provide you with months of gorgeous flowers to boot. You can find just about any color you're looking for in a passionflower, but in Florida, don't go for pink. Nearly every pink flowering *Passiflora* dies at temperatures over 90 degrees, but I'm working on that! I'll get back to you in a few years.