

VARIEGATED PLANT UNIVERSE

Ralph E. Mitchell, Director/Horticulture Agent - Charlotte County UF/IFAS Extension Service

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In the world of plants there are many shades of green; sometimes reds, yellows, and oranges. One of my favorite color combinations is seen in plants that are variegated. For every normally green plant, there seems to be a variegated counterpart. Variegated plants are often striped, but may also appear in irregular patterns of white, cream, yellow, and pink. Some variegated plants that I particularly like include the variegated cassava, the variegated pineapple, and variegated golden dewdrop.

I first saw a specimen of a variegated cassava while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer on the island nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. While there was certainly lots of cassava cultivated as a crop, there was also this eye-catching variegated cassava that I saw in someone's garden. Grown for its ornamental qualities, this shrub-like plant grows up to five feet tall and has green leaves with an irregular creamy-white to yellow variegation topped off with bright red stems. Easily grown from cuttings, a 12-inch piece placed in sterile potting medium will root in just a couple of weeks if not

sooner. Before long, you will have dozens of new plants to pass to friends. They do best in full sun, and are fairly drought-tolerant. They do tend to die back if we have a winter frost, but will soon sprout back bigger and better than new.

If you like the tropical look of bromeliads, you will like the variegated pineapple. Sometimes seen in local nurseries, this spectacular ornamental pineapple has a green leaf edged in white and sometimes a pinkish tinge. The flower is very ornamental and red in color. The ornamental fruit produced is pinkish in color and provides a beautiful finishing touch to the plant. Provide this pineapple with some partial shade to protect its color. Multiple suckers will form at the base of the old plant that can be used for propagation. The top of the mature fruit can be used to start new plants as well.

One additional noteworthy variegated plant is a native - the variegated golden dewdrop. While the normal all-green version is a great plant, there are

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Duranta erecta 'variegata'
(variegated golden dewdrop)
photo: www.botanypictures.com



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also colorful variegated cultivars in green and gold and green and white. Although these variegated versions flower and fruit less, the different foliage color really adds to the already great nature of this plant which features blue flowers and golden (yet poisonous) fruit. Variegated golden dewdrop cultivars do best in partial shade.

These are just a few of the variegated plants available on the market. As I mentioned before, there is a variegated version of just about any plant that you can think of - a variegated plant universe for collectors!



Resource:

Klingaman, G. (2007) *Plant of the Week - Cassava*. University of Arkansas Extension Service.

Gilman, E.F. (1999) *Ananas comosus 'Variegatus'*. The University of Florida Extension Service.

Gilman, E.F. (1999) *Duranta repens*. The University of Florida Extension Service.

Culbert, D. *Add Drops of Gold to Florida Yards*. University of Florida Extension Service, Okeechobee County.

For more information on all types of plants, please contact our Master Gardeners on the Plant Lifeline at 941.764.4340 from 1:00pm-4:00pm Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Our office is located at 25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3, in Port Charlotte.

MONTHLY PLANT CLINICS ARE SATURDAYS FROM 9:00AM-12:00PM.

- **Powell's Nursery** 1st Saturday of month
- **Peachland Publix**..... 2nd Saturday of month
- **Home Depot (Punta Gorda, Port Charlotte, Englewood)** 3rd Saturday of month
- **Lowes** 4th Saturday of month

PLANT CLINICS AVAILABLE ACROSS THE COUNTY:

- **Demonstration Garden** (6900 Florida Street, PG) Thursdays 9:00am-11:00am.
- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** Thursdays 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Mid-County Regional Library** 1st and 3rd Thursday of month 1:00pm-3:00pm.
- **Punta Gorda Library** 2nd and 4th Wednesday of month from 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Edison College Learning Resources Library** 3rd Tuesday of month 1:00pm-4:00pm.
- **South Gulf Cove Learning Garden** (13577 Blake Drive, PC) 3rd Wednesday of month from 9:00am-12:00pm.

Ralph Mitchell (Ralph.Mitchell@charlottefl.com) is the County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent for Charlotte County Extension Service. Contact a volunteer Master Gardener from 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 941.764.4340 or by email (Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com).

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Steele, at 941.764.4351. Allison can help educate you about the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program so that you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.