

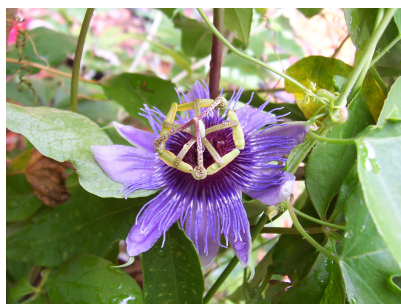
Plant of the month, July 2008

In anticipation of giving up my crown next month, I am ceasing to use the title “Jewels from the Crown” for my column. Last month’s column wasn’t about plants at all; it was a plea for new officers to help run our club. There has been some response to that plea, but not nearly enough. We still need someone to brandish the scepter at our meetings! So in my second-to-last month as queen, I’ve decided to indulge in some shameless self-promotion.

One of my early columns, a year and a half ago, was about my mania for Passifloras, and my attempts to hybridize them. This month I’m sharing some of my hybrids with you. Very soon I’ll be listing them on e-Bay! The first to appear for sale will be Passiflora ‘Edie’, named for my mom’s sister. It is a very petite, dainty plant (unusual for a passion flower!) that does very well in a hanging basket. The flowers are white and lavender-pink, about 3 ½ inches across (large for such a small plant) and extremely fragrant. The perfume is strong and sweet, like honeysuckle. The flowers appear in batches that last 5 or 6 days, every 3-4 weeks, February through May, and probably September through December, maybe even all winter. So far ‘Edie’ will not produce any fruit. If she does, it won’t be edible. ‘Edie’ is very slow to propagate from cuttings.



The second hybrid I’ll list will be P. ‘Mary Ellen DeFrancis’, named for my hubby’s mom. It’s a very fast and large growing vine, with lavender-blue and deep purple flowers about 3 inches across, that do produce (inedible) fruit with cross-pollination. The flower is very similar to some other named varieties that already exist, but it greatly extends the bloom season. The others bloom either in the early spring, or the heat of summer. ‘Mary Ellen DeFrancis’ fills in that in-between time in late spring and early summer, and blooms sporadically the rest of the season. The vine is very easy to propagate from cuttings.



In my December ‘06 column on Passifloras, I said not to expect to find any pink flowered species suitable for the Florida climate. Well I’ve since found a couple, but I’ve also created one! Unfortunately, again, not a fruiting variety, but what a bloomer! I’ve named it P. ‘Raspberry Strudel’. The 3 ½ inch sturdy flowers are magenta, pink and white, and produced at every leaf node, apparently all year. They have a light fragrance. The vine is a fast grower, but not rampant. It puts most of its energy into flowers. It is fairly easy to propagate from cuttings.



Well, that’s it for now, but I’m still searching for that pink passion flower with tasty fruit. Wish me luck! And run for queen!!