



Coleus 'Lorikeet'

Hot Market, Cool Houseplants

By Chuck Pavlich

Coleus 'Fancy Feathers Copper'

Amid the red-hot, got to have it, forget ever buying a home, houseplant market, are a few notable and inexpensive alternatives. Can't fill an order for 1,000 philodendron 'Caramel Marble' that sells for an average of \$10,000 in a 6-inch pot? Maybe it's time to get your piece of the pie with these easy-to-obtain varieties that remain novel and uncommon.

For years, Terra Nova Nurseries, based in Canby, Oregon, has brought innovative home- and garden-worthy perennials, annuals and houseplants — yes, houseplants — to the worldwide market.

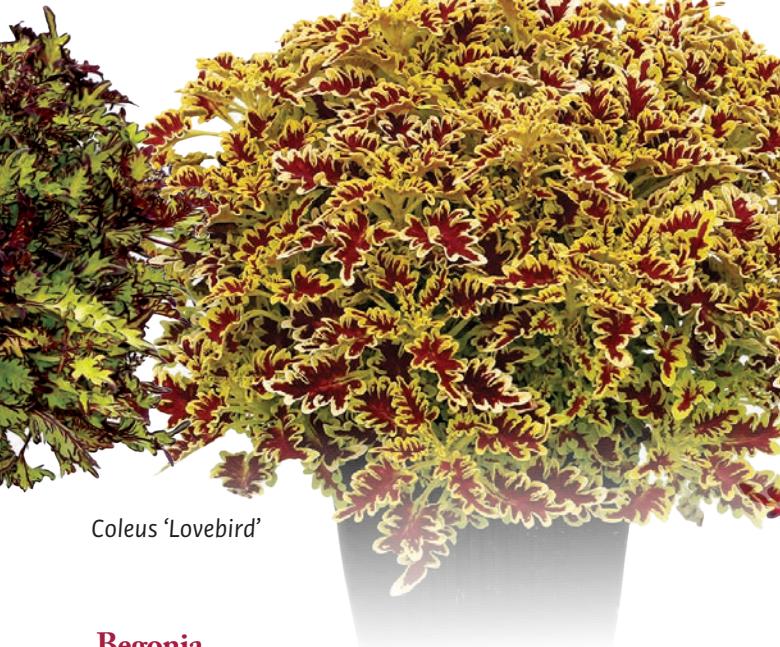
Coleus

A grower and consumer favorite, coleus 'Fancy Feathers Copper', has featherlike, copper-colored foliage with a low, mounding habit.

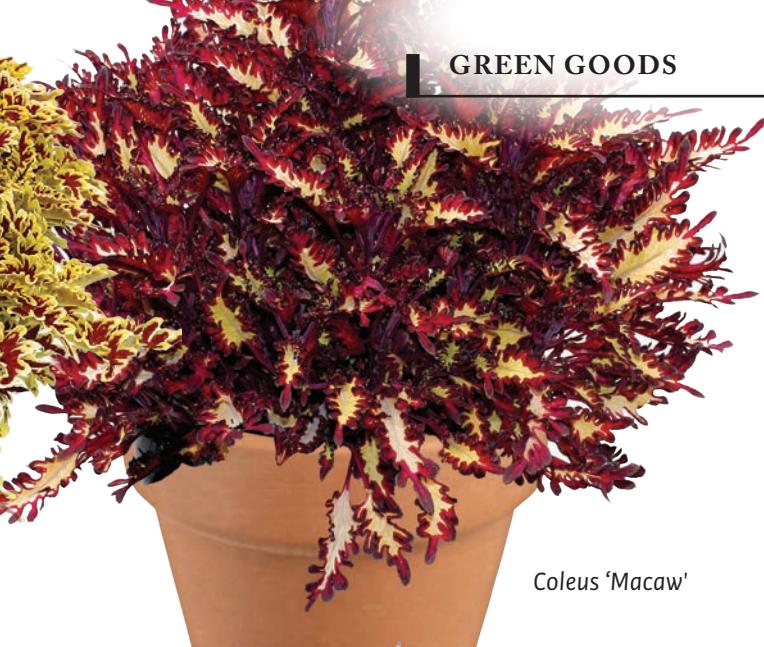
Keeping with the bird theme, coleus 'Lorikeet', 'Lovebird' and 'Macaw' are a trio of fanciful, fabulous foliage. Coleus 'Lorikeet' features lemon-lime foliage, edged in maroon and sometimes topped with light blue flower spikes that are perfectly in scale with the rest of the plant.

Coleus 'Lovebird' is a cheery red and gold combo. Its compact habit and super ruffled foliage are hard to ignore.

Coleus 'Macaw' has dramatic, glowing foliage that looks like it should radiate heat. Each leaf is an individual flame with a light-yellow heart and an incredible, broad, searing red margin bordering on violet and aging to almost black. Coleus require little care indoors. Average light, temperature and good fertility are all that is needed for success.



Coleus 'Lovebird'



Coleus 'Macaw'

Begonia

Terra Nova's begonia breeding program began with the goal of extending the cold tolerance of this important foliage plant by sourcing rare, high-altitude species that had ornamental foliage. It was essentially a re-do of breeding lines that date back more than a century ago, with a fresh perspective. Test crosses revealed a secret way to get the top of the foliage as colorful as the bottom of the foliage of these rugged species. Encompassing a range of sizes and uses, these begonias are finding their way into garden borders, patio pots, and, in the winter, a complementing companion in a poinsettia program.

Aptly named begonia 'Holiday Jolly Holly' has small, jagged-edged foliage of pine green, liberally splashed with silver dots. The crowning feature of Jolly Holly are the sterile red flowers that appear in clusters just over the top of the foliage. The male flowers never open and remain as charming, bright red "holly berries" for weeks.

Elegant and classic looking, begonia 'Holiday Silver Bells' has a matching habit to Jolly Holly, but the foliage is a pure, silky silver with a hint of pink on the underside of the leaves. This variety lends itself to year-round use and would be a welcome addition to the spring foliage market, especially at Easter and Mother's Day.

Terra Nova's T Rex line of large foliage begonias is used worldwide, indoors and out. Begonia 'T Rex Ruby Slippers' is famous for its glossy, deep ruby-colored foliage. This award-winning variety was crowned Best Novelty at the Colorado State

Begonia
'Holiday Jolly
Holly'Begonia 'Holiday
Silver Bells'

University (CSU) Annual Flower Trial Garden in 2019. If a foliage begonia can withstand the stresses of high altitude, low humidity Fort Collins, Colorado, then the average conditions in a house are going to be like a vacation spa by comparison.

The T Rex group has riotously colored foliage, and with its fresh, vigorous demeanor are a joy to grow. Indoor rules for begonias are simple; keep them out of strong light, don't let them dry out and feed them regularly.





Begonia 'T Rex Ruby Slippers'



Heuchera 'Little Cuties Frost'



Heuchera 'Little Cuties Sweet Tart'

Heuchera
'Little Cuties
Peppermint'

Heuchera

Perhaps the surprise of the houseplant world is the use of heuchera as an indoor plant. Yes, heuchera! Specially bred to be naturally dwarf, Terra Nova's Little Cuties series is a surprising and novel alternative to tropicals. With eight varieties to choose from, certainly there is one to fill the bill.

From the very beginning, the Little Cuties were a dramatic departure for the world's leading heuchera breeder. Some of the best choices for indoor use are 'Little Cuties Frost' with its silvery, purple-colored foliage. 'Little Cuties Peppermint' is a minty green, highlighted by a lacy, silver veil. The delightful 'Little Cuties Sweet Tart' possesses bright, lime-green leaves and very large clusters of hot pink flowers. The name Sweet Tart is spot-on perfect and so is this plant.

Indoors, heuchera are undemanding; a window with east exposure is ideal; fluorescent lights are also great. Heuchera can have a tough time in front of a heat source as most houseplants do, so play it cool for our versatile friends. In the spring, you can "vacation" your heuchera outdoors too, replenishing their vim and vigor. Heuchera are easy house guests requiring a little more than regular watering, average light and occasional fertilizer — slow-release pellets work very well.

Capturing a piece of the out-of-control houseplant market is easy with these selections. Plus, there is an excellent supply, and they are domestically available. It is time to get back inside your comfort zone and gain back a chunk of the market.

Chuck Pavlich is director of new product development for Terra Nova Nurseries and is an international garden designer and lecturer. For more information, visit www.terranovalnurseries.com.