

The Garden Connection

Isanti Co. Master Gardeners

May - June 2024, Vol 11, Issue 3

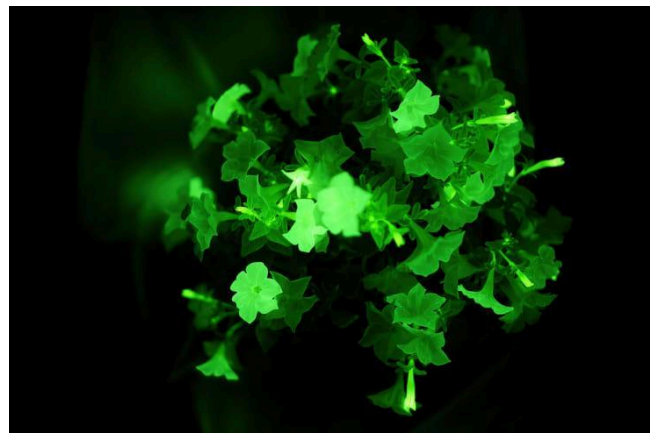
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Firefly Petunias Mary Januschka, ICMG

Petunias that glow in the dark? Light Bio. Inc. is now marketing a petunia that is bioluminescent. The glowing petunia was created using four genes from a bioluminescent mushroom and a fifth gene from another fungus. It takes no special treatment to cause the plant to glow. The flowers are white, but when it's dark out, you can see that the petals show a green-white glow. The new buds are the brightest and look like fireflies.

The chemical reactions coded for within these genes are part of a cycle of reactions that is self-sustaining. It took 10 years to get the plants approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the plants are now for sale online. The approval of the Firefly petunia follows the approval (2021) of another genetically modified petunia where a maize gene was incorporated into the genome that codes for the production of an orange petunia.



Firefly Petunia. Permission granted to use these photos by Light Bio, Inc. 04/11/2024

Sources:

<https://www.npr.org/2024/04/08/1242346659/genetically-modified-bioluminescent-petunias-make-their-own-light>

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/this-genetically-engineered-petunia-glows-in-the-dark-and-could-be-yours-for-29/#:~:text=Consumers%20in%20the%20United%20States%20can%20now%20pre-order,the%20dark%2C%20the%20plant%20glows%20a%20faint%20green.>

Purple Tomatoes

Poppy Irwin, ICMG

There is a new purple tomato on the market this year and it is available for purchase by the general public. It is a GMO (genetically modified organism) named Empress Purple Tomato. This GM purple tomato was engineered by scientists at Norfolk Plant Sciences in the UK and lead by biochemist Cathie Martin and her team. The genetic engineering technique used was to insert two genes responsible for purple color in edible snapdragon flowers into tomato plants. This is the first GM food crop directly marketed to home gardeners in the United States. It is not subject to regulation by the USDA because it does not pose a plant pest risk. Any advertising claiming that this tomato reduces possible disease or more nutrition has been proven.

If you choose to purchase non-genetically modified purple tomatoes there are several kinds on the market. Some of them are Cherokee Purple, Ukrainian Purple, Dwarf Purple Heart, Dwarf Purple Reign and Indigo Rose. There are also black tomatoes which look somewhat purple.



[USDA OKs GMO purple tomatoes with enhanced 'nutritional quality'foxla.com](https://www.foxla.com/story/news/nation/2018/08/28/usda-oks-gmo-purple-tomatoes-with-enhanced-nutritional-quality/foxla.com)

Sources: USDA, Norfolk Plant Sciences, MPR News, ScientificAmerica.com and NPR.org

Monthly Meeting Education

Cambridge Library, 6:30 pm

July – No meeting or seminar

August 8 – Growing Great Speakers (Zoom), Jackie Froemming, State Leadership team

September 12 – New Ideas & Lessons Learned, Jill Arnoldy & Others, Isanti Co. MG

October 10 – PICKM hosted by Chisago County, same as our normal meeting date

November 14 – Christmas Trees, Phil Hartley, Pinestead Tree Farm

December – No seminar

Speaker Series
Cambridge Library, 10 am

October 5 – Beth Dooley, “Cooking Matters (Gardening Does, too!)” Award-winning food writer, author and newspaper columnist for the Star Tribune and MN Public Radio’s Appetites.

Education Opportunities

MN Landscape Arboretum classes: Go to the Arboretum website for registration information, more class options and walks and tours. <https://www.arboretum.umn.edu/gardening.aspx>

July 11, 5 – 7 pm – *Flower Arranging – Hand-tied Summer Bouquet*. Instructor: Susan Snegosky, Arboretum staff member, floral designer, and owner of [Fiddles and Fronds](#).

Location: Snyder Building, Tea Room (SOLD OUT, check for a wait list)

July 13 or August 3, 10 am – Noon - Special Access: Wetland Management and Restoration.

Instructors Derek Carwood: Arboretum Manager of Adult Education and Sarah Rademacher: Wetlands Horticulturist. Location: Visitor Center – Teaching Classroom

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