



## New Plants for Florida: Lisianthus<sup>1</sup>

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Lisianthus (*Eustoma grandiflorum*) is a relatively new cut flower. Sakata Seed Company was the first to offer lisianthus as a new cut flower in the United States in the early 1980s. Growers and consumers alike were anxious to try lisianthus because it has elegant and beautiful flowers in 15 colors, the flowers have a long vase life, and there are few “blue” flowers available in the cut flower market.

While many advances were made by Japanese breeders in the development of lisianthus as a new flower crop, the varieties lacked heat tolerance, a very important attribute for Florida growers. A lisianthus selection and breeding program was initiated by FAES Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in 1985 under the direction of Brent Harbaugh and in cooperation with Jay Scott. The lisianthus varieties available at that time only could be produced profitably when flowered in late April to June. Their goal was to develop heat-tolerant dwarf and semidwarf varieties that could be grown year round in Florida. **Maurine Blue** (pot plant) and

**Florida Blue** (bedding plant) varieties were released from this program in 1995. They were the first heat-tolerant lisianthus varieties whose seedlings could be grown at 82° to 88° F, making them highly desirable for year-round production in Florida. Additional varieties released from this program provide the same heat tolerance and a wide selection of colors.

The Florida Series is being marketed worldwide, and the Maurine Series is being marketed in the U.S. and Canada. In Florida, the Florida Series represented more than 50 percent of the lisianthus plug production and flowering pots sold as bedding plants for 2002. The Maurine Series sold as plugs for pot plant production, (5- to 6-inch flowering potted plants) represents more than 50 percent of this market.

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**Table 1.** Lisianthus varieties developed by FAES.

<b>Variety</b>	<b>Date of Release</b>
Maurine Blue, Florida Blue	1995
Maurine Pink, Maurine Pink Lilac, Maurine White, Maurine White-on-Blue, Maurine Light Blue, Maurine Lilac	1997
Florida Pink, Florida Light Blue	1998
Florida Silver	2000
Maurine Daylight, Maurine Twilight	2001