



Three New Cultivars of *Heliconia orthotricha*: 'Kauai Morning Sun', 'Kauai Christmas', and 'Kauai Sunset'

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Heliconia flowers are among the showiest of the “bold tropicals” distinctive in the floral arrangements that create the special experience of Hawaii. Recent evaluations of new heliconia accessions have confirmed that *Heliconia orthotricha* species have excellent qualities for cutflower production. As a result of

extensive testing and evaluation by CTAHR on Kauai, three *H. orthotricha* selections have been named and released. These cultivars are ‘Kauai Morning Sun’, ‘Kauai Christmas’, and ‘Kauai Sunset’.

The Hawaii Tropical Flowers and Foliage Association, Kauai Chapter, had identified the lack of high-yield-



‘Kauai Morning Sun’ (#4218) has “fresh, clean, pastel colors—like early morning, just as the sun rises.” It has an erect, compact, light-bodied inflorescence with light rosy-red, relatively nonpubescent bracts. The upper margins and tips of the bracts are green, accented by a narrow strip of black. The pale yellow rachis is medium in length. The plant habit is musoid, compact, and clumping with green, glabrous leaves on slightly pubescent petioles. Flowering is heaviest from October to February. Vase life averages 26 days.



‘Kauai Christmas’ (#4339) has erect, medium-bodied inflorescences and bright red, pubescent bracts with green upper margins and tips accented below by a narrow, black border. The rachis is long and white. The cultivar name describes the crisp, cheery colors of Christmas: “It looks like it’s saying, ‘Merry Christmas!’” The plant habit is musoid, clumping, and medium in height. The petioles are slightly pubescent, with glabrous leaves. Flowering is heaviest from December to February. Vase life averages 19 days.



‘Kauai Sunset’ (#4075) “looks like a deepening sunset.” It has erect, stout-bodied inflorescences. The bracts are deep red and pubescent, with green upper margins and tips accented below by a flat-black border. The rachis is light yellow and compact. The plant habit is musoid, clumping, and medium-short in height. The petioles are pubescent, with glabrous leaves. Flowering is heaviest from January to March. Vase life averages 19 days.

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ing, winter-blooming tropical flowers with sufficient vase life as a major impediment to expanding the tropical cutflower export market. Also lacking were adequate assessment of and production information about introduced plant materials. As a result, two collection trips to South and Central America were initiated by HTFFA-Kauai Chapter with coordination, guidance, and participation by private collectors, CTAHR, and the National Tropical Botanical Gardens, Kauai. Funding for the collections was provided by grants from the County of Kauai Office of Economic Development (CK-OED) and the Kauai Economic Development Board. These collections provided the planting materials evaluated by CTAHR.

The introductions were indexed for plant diseases by CTAHR, quarantined by the Hawaii Department of Agriculture for six months, quarantined an additional six months by CTAHR, and then field-planted. Early observations indicated that the *H. orthotricha* accessions had outstanding potential as commercial cutflowers. Consequently, funds were acquired by CTAHR to conduct expanded advanced-testing to assess yield, vase life, and flowering season of the 22 *H. orthotricha* accessions using 'Edge-of-Night', the only *H. orthotricha*

cultivar then available, as the control. The funds were provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Agency, via CK-OED, as part of the Hurricani Iniki recovery efforts on Kauai. The experimental design consisted of five plants of each of the 22 clones, replicated three times, for a total of 15 plants per clone.

Three accessions were selected by CTAHR to be recommended for commercial cut-flower production based on data that showed high flower yields, winter-blooming proclivity, and long vase life. Yield and flowering season data were collected every two weeks over a period of 28 months. Vase-life data were obtained by harvesting, packing, and shipping the flowers to CTAHR's Department of Plant Molecular Physiology at UH-Manoa, where they were evaluated in five experiments over a period of 17 months. The cultivars selected were then given names descriptive of visual impressions of the flowers by HTFFA-Kauai Chapter members.

Rhizomes of the three new *H. orthotricha* cultivars are available from the Hawaii Tropical Flowers and Foliage Association, Kauai Chapter, PO Box 2015, Kapaa, HI 96746.