

Caladium Leaf type and Transparency as related to Sun Tolerance

When discussing caladium leaf morphology, we often distinguish just the two commercially available types, 'Fancy Leaf' varieties and 'Strap or Lance Leaf' varieties. The University of Florida has published an article where, based on genetic studies (Deng and Harbaugh 2006), they describe three basic leaf type groups:

- **Fancy-leaf:** Large and heart-shaped with two prominent lobes, each with a prominent vein. We would add that the petiole typically attaches in the interior of the leaf 1-2' from the leaf margin.
- **Lance-leaf:** Spear-shaped with two smaller basal lobes. Petioles attach at or very near the leaf margin.
- **Strap-leaf:** One narrow, long leaf blade with one main vein, no obvious basal lobes. Petioles attach at or very near the leaf margin.

Further descriptions of the various leaf types include;

- **Fancy-leaf:** The petiole typically attaches in the interior of the leaf 1-2' from the leaf margin. As a group, Fancy-leaf varieties, are less sun tolerant than either Lance or Strap leaf varieties. This is the most commonly available type.
- **Lance-leaf:** Petioles attach at or very near the leaf margin. As a group, Lance-leaf varieties, are more sun tolerant. This is the second most commonly available type.
- **Strap-leaf:** Petioles attach at or very near the leaf margin. These are very sun tolerant but because of small tuber yields are not generally available.

Along with shape, caladiums leaves can be further described based on their degree of transparency. In both the Fancy-leaf and Lance-leaf types there are varieties that have translucent to relatively opaque leaves. Generally, the more opaque the leaf, the more sun tolerant the variety. Here are examples of the various degrees of transparency.



High degree of transparency in the variety Cinderella, so much so that you can read the name of the pen "Sharpie" right through the leaf. This variety is very susceptible to sun burn and therefore should only be planted in the shade.



The variety Pink Symphony is still a highly translucent variety but less so than Cinderella and therefore can take a few hours of morning sun.



The variety Classic Pink is relatively opaque and can tolerate up to 6 hours of morning sun.

When choosing varieties, pick those suitable to the location in which you plan to put them.