

What are the best drought

Jim Broccolo — Clesen Wholesale

When Jim Broccolo, account manager at Clesen Wholesale, recommends *Kalanchoe thrysiflora*, “everyone thinks, ‘Oh, that’s the grocery store plant that everyone grows in their house.’” But this is not your grandmother’s kalanchoe.

Kalanchoe thrysiflora offers large, paddle-shaped blue-grey leaves rimmed in dusky red for ‘Red Lips’ or infused with a deeper red streaked with cream and pink in ‘Fantastic.’ The thick leaves grow 4-6 inches long and 2-5 inches wide. The plants grow 1-2 feet tall and 2-3 feet wide.

“They create instant impact. The customer knows what the planting looks like right away. You don’t have to wait for it to fill in or flower,” Broccolo says. “A lot of people focus on flower power, but this is a way to have color all the time with just foliage.”

Although landscape contractors’ use of succulents is often limited to green roofs and the occasional container planting, Broccolo thinks the striking form of *Kalanchoe thrysiflora* makes it a great choice for clients who want a sleek, modern, architectural look.

“For a trendy hotel, an architectur-

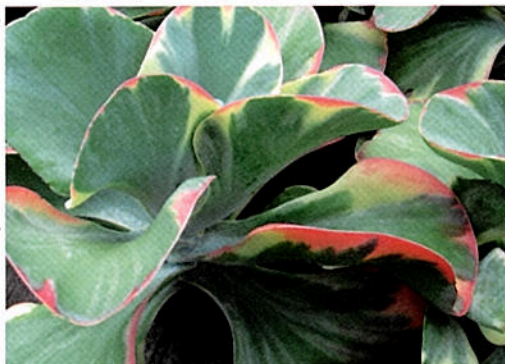
ally significant modern building or for the client who wants something different than what everyone else has, this is a great plant,” Broccolo says. “It has a cool, trendy, updated look.” He has seen it used to great effect as a groundcover in mass plantings as well as planted under urban street trees.

This succulent typically isn’t available in plugs or cellpacks, so installation can be a bit pricier than bedding plants, Broccolo admits. However, this cost can be offset on the maintenance side.

“Succulents are extremely forgiving. They grow and thrive in poor soils, and they need very little water,” he says. So, soils don’t have to be amended before planting. There’s no need for a fertiliza-

tion program or supplemental watering. Broccolo does, however, recommend cutting back the one-foot tall flower stalks before they flower towards the end of the season. The light yellow flowers aren’t particularly attractive, and flowering can shorten the plant’s life, he explains.

Kalanchoe thrysiflora doesn’t mind the wide temperature swings that have wreaked havoc on other plants the past few years, Broccolo says. The plants aren’t fazed by 90+ degree days, but they’re also accustomed to cool night temperatures. In fact, overnight temperatures in the 50s often intensify the foliage color. The plant is hardy to about 27 degrees F. It grows in full sun to partial shade. ☼



Kalanchoe thrysiflora