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Boyle's hybrid cactuses headed to market

By [Sam Seaver](#), Chronicle staff

After more than 15 years of research, Plant and Soil Sciences professor Thomas Boyle, has developed and patented several hybrid cactuses to be grown commercially for sale to home owners all over North America.

One of the largest commercial growers in the U.S., Bay City Flower Company of Half Moon Bay, Calif. has been selected to have the exclusive license to propagate the cacti for distribution. The company chose from several hybrid cactuses developed by Boyle for propagation.

Boyle's main research at the University includes the reproductive biology of plants, pollen tube growth, seed setting and germination, which he does for seed companies and commercial growers.

His initial research of the cactuses was done in hopes of improving commercial growing procedures in order to enhance the flowering process of the plants, which normally takes two years to complete.

While doing the original research, Boyle said "I saw some flaws in the flowering process such as flower size, flower longevity and abundance which could be improved genetically and would be of value to commercial growers and home owners." He built on the basic research he was doing for commercial growers and developed the hybrids through a process he calls "applied research."

The Commercial Ventures and Intellectual Property (CVIP) Office has worked with Boyle and the Bay City Flower Company for five years to establish the legal agreement between the firm, Boyle and the University.

"It's been a fantastic process to watch Tom take his research and turn it into something commercially viable. This is certainly in the tradition of a land grant institution to produce plants for the general public and it's really been a pleasure working with Tom," said assistant vice chancellor and director of CVIP Brad Moynahan. The University will reap thousands of dollars over time as a result of the marketing of the cactuses to the general public, Moynahan added.

All strains of the cactuses originated in the tropical rainforests of eastern Brazil. In addition to Christmas and Easter cactuses, Boyle named one of the hybrids Rio in

"Amherst was one of the best of the early seedlings and I thought it would be appropriate to name it after the town it originated in," said Boyle.



Thomas Boyle displays one of his hybrid Christmas cactuses in the French Hall greenhouse. The hybrid has not been named yet. (Stan Sherer photo)