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# GENETICALLY MODIFIED PETUNIAS IN AUSTRALIA



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health**

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

**Are there unauthorised GM petunias in the Australian market? If so, how widespread are they?**

The Gene Technology Regulator (the Regulator) has become aware that unauthorised genetically modified (GM) petunias have entered the Australian and international markets. The GM petunias are pictured above and have been marketed under the names (from left to right) African Sunset, Trilogy Red, Trilogy Mango and Trilogy Deep Purple. The petunias have been modified to produce an orange pigment found naturally in other flowering plants.



The Regulator and her office (the OGTR) are working to clarify the extent to which GM petunias are present here, and are taking appropriate action where the presence of GM plants is confirmed. In this case GM petunias are not thought to pose a risk to human health or the environment, but they do not have regulatory approval and therefore must not be marketed.



**What is the Regulator doing about GM petunias in the Australian supply chain?**

The Regulator is working with the Australian based importers and suppliers to make it clear to businesses holding GM petunias that they must not be sold, and therefore will have to be taken off the market. The Regulator is also providing advice to importers and suppliers that the existing stocks of GM petunias should be destroyed.



### **What do I do if I have some GM petunias?**

Petunia plants are annuals and are unlikely to survive without human help. The GM petunias can be left to die naturally. If you don't want to wait for them to die naturally, or if you have any unplanted seedlings, there are no special methods for the disposal as they are not thought to pose a risk (e.g. compost or household rubbish bin is fine). However, as there is no current regulatory approval it is an offence to knowingly plant or otherwise propagate them.



### **Why are GM petunias not allowed in Australia? What are the risks?**

Australia's Gene Technology Regulatory scheme controls the release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and is designed to protect human health and safety and the environment. In this case GM petunias are not thought to pose a risk, but they do not have regulatory approval and therefore must not be marketed.

### **What GM plants are allowed in the Australia? Are GM seeds permitted?**

GMOs cannot be brought into Australia or grown without appropriate authorisation. The Regulator has approved some types of GM cotton, canola and carnations for commercial cultivation in Australia, and a number of other GM plants for field trials. GM seeds (and other types of GMOs) can also be brought in by researchers, but this requires authorisation and the GMOs must not be released into the environment. Details can be found on the Regulator's website (<http://www.ogtr.gov.au/>). The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources also regulates the import of seeds into Australia (<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/import/goods/plant-products/seeds-for-sowing>).

You can get in touch with the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) by email [ogtr@health.gov.au](mailto:ogtr@health.gov.au), via the OGTR website (<http://www.ogtr.gov.au/>), free call 1800 181 030, fax 02 6271 4202 or post: Office of the Gene Technology Regulator MDP 54, GPO Box 9848, Canberra ACT 2601.