

JANUARY 2001 PLANT FORUM NOTES

Thank you to all that brought plants to the January meeting! There were a number of unexpected plants, probably due to the warm weather that we've been experiencing lately.

In addition to the plants discussed below the following plants were shown:

Agathis australis, *Agathis robusta*, *Aloe cameronii*, *Camellia japonica* 'Reieyoku', *Camellia* 'Egao Corkscrew', *Camellia sasanqua* 'Hana-daijin Special', *Cantua buxifolia* 'Hot Pants', *Clytostoma callistegioides* - fruits, *Leptospermum scoparium* 'Kiwi', *Leptospermum scoparium* 'Wairere', *Lophomyrtus ralphii*, *Lupinus succulentus*, *Narcissus* 'Ziva', *Passiflora suberosa* (two very different unnamed clones), *Pinus palustris*, *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (seven unidentified cultivars), *Pseudopanax* 'Cyril Watson', *Tabebuia impetiginosa*, and *Tulbaghia simmleri* (formerly *T. fragrans*). Please note that many of these cultivar names are not verified.

The identity of the following plants was not completely ascertained: *Iris* sp. (nearly ever-blooming bearded variety with purple flowers), *Kalanchoe* sp. (noted as similar to *K. fedtschenkoii* but blooming earlier), and an unknown plant in the Solanaceae (not planted, it appeared in the garden and grew to 3' x 4' in two months).

Other: A "Mr. T" chia pet was shown by Lili Singer.

Cupressus guadalupensis, (Cupressaceae). Guadalupe Island, Mexico. Guadalupe Island Cypress. This large evergreen tree is too rarely seen in cultivation. The specimen shown is in the Huntington Botanical Garden collection. The species is confined to the higher elevations of Guadalupe Island (Mexico) far to the west of Baja California. On the island, the tree may reach a maximum height of about 75 feet, though cultivated plants usually reach 50 to 60 feet tall. Cultivated plants may spread 30 to 40 feet wide. Young bark on these plants will be pink to reddish to greenish in color and quickly ages to gray or lavender gray. Reportedly, trunks of this tree can reach nearly 8 feet thick, but cultivated specimens with trunks over four feet thick are not known. Plants may have either bright green foliage or gray foliage. Cones are almost never produced in cultivation, though no one really knows of a reason why this is so. This cypress has been successfully grown in many parts of the state, from the coast to the central valley to inland southern valleys. It will tolerate any frost that we are likely to experience in the greater Los Angeles area, but would not grow well in our mountain and desert communities. Like most cypresses, it is a fast grower. It is apparently resistant to the cypress canker disease that severely limits the use of several cypresses in our area. Read more about this unique cypress and the other unusual plants of Guadalupe Island in Reid Moran's **Flora of Guadalupe Island**. (J. Jager)

Erythrina berteroana, (Fabaceae). Mexico to northern South America and the West Indies. Coral Tree. This is a drought-adapted, thornless, small tree that may reach from 10 to 25 feet tall. It flowers from December to February, and may produce scattered blossoms at other times of the year. Like the other coral trees, this plant is poisonous to humans. The flowers attract hummingbirds. Don noted that this was the first species of the coral trees to be introduced into cultivation in California. (D. Nelson)

Keteleeria evelyniana, (Pinaceae). China. Chinese Fir. This tree is very rarely seen in California. A tree to 150 feet tall in the wild, but thus far it is very much shorter in California. I believe that the largest specimen is growing in Occidental (northern California) at Western Hills Nursery. This tree develops gray-brown bark. New growth is noted as densely hairy. Needles reach two inches in length. The immature bright green cone (about six inches long and two inches wide) that was displayed at the meeting came from the Huntington Botanical Garden. Mature cones somewhat resemble that of our native sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*). (Note: This plant is in SCHS's **Selected Plants for Southern California Gardens** as *Keteleeria davidiana*.) (J. Jaeger)

Lachenalia bulbifera, (Hyacinthaceae). South Africa. Cape Cowslip. This bulb is admirably suited to our climate. It produces lush succulent bright green leaves in late fall, at about the same time as the first winter rains. The red tubular flowers appear around Christmas or New Year's. The flower stems will reach about eight inches high. Hummingbirds are attracted by the flowers. Cathy notes that she used to grow this *Lachenalia* in pots, but has found that they do much better when grown in the ground with no additional water at all – only natural rainfall. Snails and slugs are attracted to these plants, so if you have them in your garden be sure to take necessary precautions. Additional plants can be grown from leaf cuttings. (C. Ratner)

Leucojum aestivum (Amaryllidaceae). Great Britain to Iran. Snowflake. One of my personal favorites. Each stem carries several nodding, white, bell-like flowers. Each "petal" (as the corolla is composed of identical looking sets of 3 petals and 3 sepals, each is called a tepal instead) is tipped with a tiny green spot. These green dots are quite noticeable on the pure white tepals. The plants can be grown in full sun or in dappled shade. Too much shade and the flower stems will be too weak to bear the weight of the flowers. Cathy notes that these bulbs are grown without any summer irrigation, they "...survive on winter rain only." When grown under such conditions, the plants are very long lived. I know of some that persisted (and bloomed every year) for nearly 75 years, until houses were built on top of them. (C. Ratner)

Ruellia macrantha, (Acanthaceae). Brazil. Christmas Pride. A 3 to 6 foot tall subshrub, grown for its large, showy, dark pink flowers. Plants bloom from fall through winter. Christmas Pride can freeze in our area, but it will usually return from the roots. The plant performs best when it is cut back annually in spring. Ann notes that the plant needs average water and can be grown in sun or partial shade. She also notes that it has lanky stems that need support or control. The plant is easily grown from cuttings. (A. Freeman)

- B. O'B