

FEBRUARY 2001 PLANT FORUM NOTES

Thank you to all that brought plants to the February meeting – BUT – we need more plants!!! Everyone is encouraged to bring in plants to share with the group. Remember that you do get one free “exhibitor’s ticket” for the plant raffle if you bring in one or more plants for discussion at the forum table.

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

Aloe pictifolia, *Convolvulus cneorum*, *Delostoma roseum*, *Jasminum polyanthum*, *Linum perenne*, *Monstera deliciosa*, and *Tulbaghia simmleri*. The identity of the following plants was not completely ascertained: *Abutilon* spp. (2 hybrids: one pink flowered and one white flowered) and *Delostoma* sp. (from Quito, Ecuador).

Delostoma lobbii, (Bignoniaceae). Peru and southern Ecuador. No common name. A large shrub or small tree to 15 feet tall growing on dry hillsides in its native habitat at about 8,000 feet elevation. The plant shown can be directly traced to the seed collection by Hutchison, Wright, and Straw in 1964. The paired, 3 inch long, curved flowers are bright scarlet red. Katarina notes that the flowers are shaped like lipsticks. The opposite leaves are thick and leathery – dark green and textured above, white to brownish pubescent beneath. Plants grown inland may freeze in exceptional winters, but are dependably hardy near the coast. In nature, this plant is noted as having a dense branching habit – this is generally not so in cultivation, unless the plants are pinched and lightly pruned. (K. Eriksson)

Korthalsia laciniosa, (Arecaceae). Southeast Asia to Malaysia. Rattan Palm. One out of every five palms is a rattan palm, and the plant shown is from the third largest genera of the rattan palms. This unassuming potted palm gave no hint that in its native habitat it can scramble to heights (or lengths) of 130 feet. This species produces a spiny whip at the tip of the new growth and uses this structure to clamber over other plants. At maturity, a single leaf may reach six feet in length and is composed of numerous 12 inch long, diamond shaped leaflets. The plant was gray-green, and was already producing a number of black spines along its trunk and petioles. In our area, this is a greenhouse plant. Don noted that it makes a great potted plant when young. (D. Hodel)

Passiflora helleri, (Passifloraceae). Southern Mexico south to Costa Rica. No common name. Jorge shared another unusual passion vine. This species produces numerous one inch white flowers that smell like honey. Flowers are produced over a long period – from February until July. Leaves are shallowly three-lobed, but are nearly round in outline. The leaves have two rows of attractive dots (leaf nectar glands). This vine will reach from 20 to 30 feet tall and should be grown in full sun. It was noted that this species is generally not a host plant for butterfly larvae. (J. Ochoa)

Puya 'Deep Purple', (Bromeliaceae). Deliberate hybrid. Deep Purple Puya. Bob Wright created this hybrid between *Puya coerulea* and *Puya werdermannii*. The hybrid first bloomed in 1996. This is its third flowering. The three foot tall inflorescence is branched and carries numerous dark blue-violet three petaled flowers. The gray-green rosette of spine edged leaves turns deep purple when grown in full sun during the summer months. Bob notes that it is hardy in our area. He grows this plant on top of his garage in Arcadia. Puyas are excellent garden plants for our area. They are easily grown in full sun and dry conditions. In general, they are not fussy about soil types – but they do not like poorly drained, wet soils. Their recurved marginal spines make them extremely successful barrier plants, but do make regular garden tasks (weeding, clean up of debris, etc.) difficult. The flowers produce copious amounts of nectar that attracts hummingbirds (and frequently ants!). (B. Wright)

Rhaphidophora decursiva, (Araceae). Sri Lanka to Indonesia. No common name. This is an enormous foliage plant with dark green shiny leaves that are pinnately divided to the midrib (it was shown in comparison to *Monstera deliciosa*). The leaf blade can reach two feet in length. The plant can be grown in similar conditions: scrambling along the ground, climbing up trees. If grown “on the ground” it can spread over 15 feet. The book **Exotica** says, “slow and stubborn, and not easy to train.” The plant shown is growing on a tree trunk at the Huntington art gallery. Though this plant was described in 1857, it is not often found in either botanic or horticultural books. Katarina notes that it flowers in the winter months. (K. Eriksson)

Salvia cacaliaefolia, (Lamiaceae). Mexico (Chiapas), Guatemala and Honduras. No common name. This is a somewhat vining, succulent leaved sage that will reach 2 to 4 feet tall and 4 to 6 feet wide. Creeping rootstocks make this sage easy to propagate by division, and account for the spreading habit of the plant. The stems and leaves are more brittle than most sages. Brilliant blue flowers are produced during the cooler months of the year. This sage requires regular watering and prefers a rich, fertile soil. As was noted in the SCHS book, the quantity of flowers is often disappointing, but this is not always the case. The plant looks best when grown in partial shade, but it flowers better when grown in more sun. You choose! The plant will also look better if it is cut back hard in late winter or early spring. (J. Seidel)

Tauschia arguta, (Apiaceae). Southern California and northwestern Baja California, Mexico. No common name. This rarely grown native perennial plant has attractive, lustrous, dark green, pinnately compound leaves. The leaflets have serrated margins. Tiny yellow flowers are produced in typical inflorescences of the family (an umbel of umbels). Plants are best grown in partial shade in dry gardens. In nature, the plant is found in chaparral and woodland environments. Plants may reach 2 feet tall and will develop an equal spread. This plant was one of the principle food plants for the anise swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio zelicaon*) prior to the introduction (and subsequent invasion) of the European fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*). Many of our perennial native apiaceous plants have potential use in Southern California gardens, principally due to their beautiful foliage. (M. Huffman)

- B. O'B.