

OCTOBER 2001 PLANT FORUM NOTES

Thank you to all that brought plants to the October meeting – it was a good showing, but I know there are many more worthy plants to display!!! 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: *Alocasia brancifolia* (= *Xenophya brancaefolia*), *Xamarcrinum memoria-corsii*, *Crassula capitella* ‘Campfire’, *Duranta erecta* ‘Golden Edge’, *Lavandula x heterophylla*, *Leonotis leonurus*, *Limonium latifolium*, *Lycoris aurea*, *Orthophytum glabrum*, *Pittosporum rhombifolium*, *Pittosporum tenuifolium* ‘Marjorie Channon’, *Plectranthus fruticosus* (= *P. behrii*), *Plectranthus saccatus*, *Salvia elegans*, *Sedum spectabile*, *Thunbergia grandiflora*, *Vitex agnus-castus*, *Vitex rotundifolia* (= *V. ovata*), and *Vriesea x magnifica*.

The identity of the following plants was not completely ascertained: *Dahlia* cultivar, *Iris* cultivar, *Nepeta* sp., and *Rosa* cultivar.

Featured Plant:

Coleus grandis (incorrectly = *Plectranthus (Coleus) shirensis* in the SCHS **Selected Plants for Southern California Gardens**) (Lamiaceae). Sri Lanka? (Ceylon), East Africa? no one knows! No Common Name. I think that this is the correct name for the plant that has been traveling under a number of assumed identities in Southern California for at least two decades! Apparently, all specimens of this plant in California can be traced back to an introduction from Quail Botanical Gardens in the late 1970s or early 1980s. At that time it was known as, “Unknown Lamiaceae sp. from Sri Lanka.” It has also been known as, “*Plectranthus* sp. from Sri Lanka.” The plant is not known in the wild, but was originally described from plants growing in gardens in East Africa and Sri Lanka (Ceylon). The plant was first published in 1978 in the Kew Bulletin (in Latin), but an English language description may be found in volume three of the Handbook of the Flora of Ceylon by Dassanayake & Fosberg. They note that it is “Widely grown as a hedge plant in the upper midlands and highlands from c. 1100-2100 meters.” It appears likely that the real *Coleus (Plectranthus) shirensis* is not in cultivation in California at this time, and that it is a *Coleus* and not a *Plectranthus*. Further, it appears that *Coleus grandis* is allied to *Coleus barbatus* – a widespread species that naturally occurs from East Africa to Sri Lanka. *Coleus grandis* is a large shrub to six feet tall, with stiff upright branches. The thick leaves may reach nearly 10 inches in length and over 7 inches wide, but are often smaller. The nearly two-foot long, terminal, unbranched

inflorescence of violet-blue flowers is spectacular. Each whorl contains 10 flowers. The flowers have a musk scent. The plant has a long flowering season. It may be grown in full sun near the coast but is grown in shade inland. In all cases, it is best grown with plenty of water. (B. Koenig)

Alberta magna (Rubiaceae). Natal region (summer rainfall area), South Africa. No common name. Extremely slow growing evergreen shrub that may eventually reach six feet (though plants in the wilds of South Africa grow at least seven times larger). Foliage is shiny, dark green, and leathery. The plant blooms over a long period of time in the fall and winter with branched clusters of showy red one inch long tubular flowers that are followed by equally attractive red fruits. The most successful plants of this species are grown in shade and well drained loamy soils. Plants must always have adequate moisture. This plant is normally recommended for cool coastal climates as it dislikes dry heat and cold weather. It is a rare plant in South Africa. Since this plant is difficult to propagate (cuttings are recommended), establish, and grow, it is rarely seen. (K. Musial, Huntington Botanical Gardens)

Aloe 'Johnson's Hybrid' (Asphodelaceae). Garden Hybrid? Johnson's Hybrid Aloe. This low growing succulent is an ideal pot plant, but is equally suitable for rock gardens or edgings. The narrow, 6 to 12 inch long, yellowish-green leaves are freely produced and form dense clumps, but do not form the classic, firm, rosette forms for which many aloes are noted. This hybrid freely produces flowers in spring, fall, and winter. A few flower spikes are produced in the summer months. Flowering stems are held from 6 to 12 inches above the foliage mat. Individual tubular flowers are soft orange in color. Don notes that the plant is drought tolerant and is best grown in full sun and well drained soils. (D. Nelson)

Grevillea superba (Proteaceae). Western Australia. No common name. This is a rare plant! It was originally named in 1993, when it was segregated from *Grevillea plurijuga*. The plant has fairly rigid, one to three inch long leaves that are deeply cut into narrow linear segments that have prickly tips. The lower segments of the leaves are frequently lobed as well. The flowers are dark pink and are held in the classic *Grevillea* "toothbrush." This dense growing evergreen shrub will reach from 6 to 10 feet tall and will be nearly as wide. In a garden it can be used as a screen or barrier plant or as a flowering specimen. This plant arrived in California in the mid 1990's (to the Huntington Botanical Gardens) and was briefly sold by Monrovia Nursery. (D. Bowman)

Leonotis leonurus – a new white flowered seedling (Lamiaceae). Lion's Tail. The plant shown is a new white flowered plant that occurred as a spontaneous seedling from an orange flowered parent. The specimen shown is a definite improvement over the widely available dirty white form that is in the California nursery trade, but it is not a "pure" white. (B. Koenig)

Otacanthus caeruleus (Scrophulariaceae). Brazil. No common name. This small evergreen shrub may reach from two to three feet tall and is equally wide. It is grown for its beautiful brilliant blue flowers that are produced nearly throughout the year.

The flowers appear to be round and are split in half by a horizontal line. When a pollinator lands on the lower lip it droops a bit and reveal the stamens and pistil (similar to a snapdragon). The plant is noted as tender. Most references, including the grower of the shown specimen, note that the plant is best grown in shade (though I've been growing it in full sun in Upland for the past two years – without pruning it is now very full and dense though it does not bloom a lot). Some people have commented that their plants have been loose and gangly, but I would attribute those characteristics to excessive shade. The plant has deep green oval-shaped leaves. It needs regular watering. (J. Seidel)

- B. O'B.