

NOVEMBER 2001 PLANT FORUM NOTES

Thank you to all that brought plants to the November!!! All are 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: *Ageratum houstonianum* ‘Blue Horizon’, *Aloe* ‘Johnson’s Hybrid’, *Ananas nanus*, *Justicia fulvicoma*, *Nerine sarniensis* (hybrids), *Passiflora organensis*, *Plecostachys serpyllifolia*, *Rhododendron* ‘Anah Kruschke’, *Salvia madrensis*, *Schizostylis coccinea* (pink and red forms), *Strelitzia nicolai* (seeds), *Tillandsia secunda*, and *Vitis vinifera* ‘Purpurea’.

The identity of the following plant was not completely ascertained. The plant shown as *Pachira aquatica* (the specimen had braided trunks) is not that species, but its true identity remains a mystery.

Featured Plant:

Osa pulchra (Rubiaceae). Osa Peninsula on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica. No common name. The large, nodding, white, trumpet-shaped flowers immediately remind people of *Brugmansia*, but the foliage and flower buds of this striking evergreen tree or large shrub are much more beautiful than those of *Brugmansia*. The evening scented blossoms are likely pollinated by bats or moths and each flower lasts for about one week. Dried seeds quickly lose their viability. The greenish-white, ten-inch long flower buds have five conspicuous wings that run the length of the bud. The opposite, shiny, dark green, obovate leaves are reminiscent of the coffee plant. This species is exceedingly rare in the wild, and is known from a single site along the Rio Aguabuena in the Boscosa Field Station where only two of the several known plants are reported to flower and set fruit. In the wild, this plant grows in the heavily shaded shrub layer of the lowland tropical evergreen moist forest where rainfall is about 150 inches per year. In our area the plant requires a greenhouse environment. Plants growing in containers at Rancho are about 6 feet tall and are nearly as wide. When grown in greenhouses, this plant is susceptible to attack by scale insects. The plant shown was grown from seed collected (with permits) by Dylan Hannon, Barry Hammel and Tom Croat. Currently, this plant has only been grown at Missouri Botanical Garden and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Both gardens are experimenting with propagation methods. There are two other undocumented reports of sightings of this spectacular plant in the wilds of Costa Rica. *Osa* is in the *Portlandia* alliance of the Rubiaceae, a group of several genera of shrubs that share showy, generally white, trumpet-shaped flowers. *Portlandia* is grown ornamentally in Hawaii and Florida. This plant was originally described in 1974 as *Hintonia pulchra* (at that time it was thought to be the fifth species in that genus).

It was subsequently reclassified in 1979 into the genus *Osa* (principally due to its wingless seeds), where it is the only species. (D. Hannon, RSABG)

Arbutus 'Marina' (Ericaceae). Garden Hybrid. Marina Strawberry Tree. Evergreen tree to an unknown ultimate height in our area. The original plant in the Marina district of San Francisco was in the garden of Victor Reiter. In that cool foggy environment, the plant grew to a height of about 65 feet. The plant can be grown as a standard or as a multi-trunked specimen. Although this plant has been known for many years, it is only now becoming available, as vegetative propagation efforts were often unreliable. In addition to cutting grown plants, tissue culture methods have now made this plant commercially viable. The plant is notable for its smooth rich mahogany red bark (peels annually in June) of younger branches and trunks. Older branches and trunks develop a checkered bark. Plants bloom profusely in late winter and again in late fall with numerous pinkish urn-shaped flowers in branched cascading inflorescences. The fruits resemble those of the strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) and develop shortly after the flowers fall. The red-orange fruits are about one-half inch in diameter and are attractive to birds. The dark green, leathery leaves are similar in character to those of our native madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), but are much smaller. Established plants may tolerate short periods of drought but appreciate some summer irrigation. (B. O'Brien)

XGraptopetalia 'Opalina' (Crassulaceae). Garden Hybrid. No common name. This plant is an intergeneric hybrid between *Graptopetalum amethystinum* and *Echeveria colorata* var. *colorata* that was created by Robert Grim of San Jose, California. The plant forms large rosettes from 4 to 6 inches across of succulent rounded leaves. The leaves break off easily but will readily root and form new plants. It is hardy throughout the Los Angeles basin. Best grown in pots in bright shade. (J. Citron)

Justicia brandegeana 'Yellow Queen' (Acanthaceae). Mexico. Yellow Queen Shrimp Plant. The plant was shown as *J. b.* 'Chartreuse' which is a synonym for *J. b.* 'Yellow Queen'. The most notable features of this cultivar are the yellow-green bracts in the flower heads. This easily grown small shrub will reach 3 to 4 feet tall and is best grown in partial shade. (C. Ratner)

Nerstia mexicana (Rubiaceae). Mexico, Hidalgo state. No common name. Evergreen shrub to six feet tall. White, two-inch long, bell-shaped, fragrant flowers. This plant is also a member of the *Portlandia* alliance in the Rubiaceae family. (D. Hannon/RSABG)

Salvia guaranitica 'Argentine Skies' (Lamiaceae). Mexico. Argentine Skies Sage. Fall blooming evergreen perennial/shrub to five feet tall. The large showy flowers of this cultivar are pale blue (flowers are typically shades of rich purple). 'Argentine Skies' is often not as vigorous a plant as other forms of *S. guaranitica*, but it certainly is unusual. Plants must have regular garden watering and more sun than shade. Excessive shade will cause the plants to become floppy and they will not flower as well. (J. Brosius, Magic Growers)

Salvia mexicana 'Limelight' (Lamiaceae). Quetaro Province, Mexico. Limelight Mexican Sage. Fall blooming evergreen perennial/shrub from 3 to 10 feet tall and about half as wide. Foliage is dark green. Flowers are dark blue-violet. The calyx is bright chartreuse green, and is the feature that distinguishes this cultivar. Plants are fast growing and must have regular watering. 'Limelight' may be grown in nearly full sun to partial shade. This plant was originally collected by Robert Ornduff of the University of California Botanical Garden in Berkeley in 1978. (R. Dykzeul)

- B. O'B.