

FEBRUARY 2002 PLANT FORUM NOTES

Thank you to all that brought plants to the February meeting!!! 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: *Abutilon* ‘Chameleon’, *Calliandra eriophylla*, *Clerodendrum ugandense*, *Dichelostemma pulchellum*, *Euphorbia cylindrifolia*, *Ficus vasta* (shown as *F. socotrana*), *Myoporum parvifolium* ‘Burgundy Carpet’, *Salvia dorrii*, *Scadoxus membranaceus* (shown as *S. puniceus*), *Tulipa* ‘Early Harvest’, *Westringia* ‘Jervis Gem’, *Westringia* ‘Wynyabbie Gem Variegated’.

The identity of the following plant could not be completely ascertained: *Myoporum*–variegated – this appears to be a variegated form of the plant known as *Myoporum* ‘South Coast’ or *Myoporum* ‘Pacificum’.

Featured Plant:

Trichodesma scotti (Boraginaceae). No common name. Socotra (Yemen). A spectacular potted specimen with two large inflorescences was shown. The inflorescence carries numerous pendulous three-inch long creamy white flowers. Individual flowers are funnel-shaped and have five petals arranged in an overlapping pinwheel-like effect. Each of the nodding flowers is crowned by a bright green calyx and a short arching pedicel. Flowers produce copious amounts of nectar. The large rounded leaves are bright green and are held only near the ends of the branches. On Socotra, this plant is noted as a small tree or a large shrub growing in sun or in deep shade at elevations of 2,000 to 4,000 feet. In cultivation in California it is often short-lived and should be grown in partial shade with ample water. Plants in California typically bloom in late winter. Dylan stated that this is a shrub growing to seven feet tall. In 1899, five field-collected plants were sent by Dr. Forbes (a botanist) from Socotra in a Wardian case to the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. The plants arrived on March 23, 1899 and survived. Seedlings grown from seed collected in 1899 thrived and it was noted that one of them bloomed before 1902. The species epithet honors the “Scott” of the Balfour, Cockburn & Scott 1879-1880 botanical expedition from the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh to Socotra. This plant was named by Balfour in 1884 – and yes, it is the same Balfour as honored in *Pinus balfouriana*, California’s foxtail pine. (D. Hannon)

Calandrinia spectabilis (Portulacaceae). No common name. Chile. This succulent-leaved perennial is noted for its racemes of two-inch wide bright purple flowers.

Flowering plants may reach a height of two feet. The plant should be grown in full sun in well-drained soils. (J. Jaeger, The Huntington)

Cuphea hyssopifolia 'La Chiquita' (Lythraceae). La Chiquita False Heather. Mexico. This is an extremely dwarf form of the ubiquitous false heather. It is expected that this cultivar will never grow higher than one foot tall. This plant is slower growing and is said to be just as durable in the garden. An abundance of tiny pale pink flowers appear nearly year round. Average garden conditions should suffice. This plant is a new introduction from Desert to Jungle Nursery. (G. Hammer, Desert to Jungle Nursery)

Dracaena cinnabari (Dracaenaceae). No common name. Socotra (Yemen). A young potted plant of this rarely seen species was shown. Mature plants of this species resemble those of *Dracaena draco*, the species from the Canary Islands. Plants are noted as common on the higher slopes of granitic mountains on Socotra. Several plants were shipped in Wardian cases to the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh in 1899. These plants along with many seedlings grown from fruits collected from a single specimen collected on January 26, 1899 at Hamaderu at 2,500 feet elevation are likely the first successful cultivation of this species in Europe. (R. Weld, Fernwood Plants)

Eremophila abietina (Myoporaceae). Spotted Poverty Bush. Western Australia. Believe it or not, there are over 275 taxa of *Eremophila*! The species epithet, abietina, is a reference to the supposed resemblance of fir tree foliage and the leaves of this plant. The linear leaves are dark green and are less than one inch long. Solitary inch-long tubular flowers are pale mauve with maroon spots. The calyx enlarges as the flower fades and it may turn from scarlet to bluish green – greatly extending its colorful period. Mature plants may reach 3 to 7 feet tall and are equally wide. This plant is from the central desert of Australia, where it grows on rocky outcrops. In cultivation, grow the spotted poverty bush in a hot, dry, well-drained location. Unlike many Australian plants, this one will tolerate some frost. (D. Hannon, RSABG)

Polypodium californicum (Polypodiaceae). California Polypody Fern. California and northwestern Baja California, Mexico. This commonly seen though widely unappreciated native fern easily adapts to cultivation. It is perfectly adapted to California's mediterranean climate – appearing from nowhere after the first autumn rains and disappearing at the arrival of hot dry summer weather. Adding water during dry spells during the winter months is appreciated, but additional summer water should be withheld. California polypody fern prefers shady conditions, but will tolerate a fair amount of sunlight. (R. Weld, Fernwood Plants)

Strobilanthes isophyllus (Acanthaceae). Bedding Conehead. Northeastern India. This plant was originally described in 1867 by Dr. Thomas Anderson the Superintendent of the Royal Botanical Gardens in Calcutta from specimens growing in the Garden. This subshrub may be expected to grow to a height of 2 to 3 feet tall and will spread equally wide. The glabrous leaves are narrowly lanceolate in shape and may reach a length of 4 inches. Lavender, one-inch flowers are produced in groups of four in terminal head-like clusters. This species tolerates less humidity than most other species

of *Strobilanthes*, so it is much more likely to be successfully grown in the greater LA region. Gary notes that this new introduction for southern California gardens will bloom in late winter and that it prefers light shade. (G. Hammer, Desert to Jungle Nursery)

- B. O'B.