

MAY 2002 PLANT FORUM NOTES

Thanks to Joyce Wolf for a beautiful bouquet of roses, iris, alstroemeria and the Australian stunner, Snowy Everlasting (*Ozothamnus diosmifolius*).

In addition to the plants discussed below the following plants, described in the Society's **Selected Plants for Southern California Gardens**, were shown: *Aesculus californica* and *A. c.* 'Canyon Pink', *Callistemon* 'Jeffersii', *Carpenteria californica*, *Dierama*, *Euphorbia xantii*, *Galvezia juncea* (2 forms were shown, one glabrous, one tomentose), *Hatiora salicornioides*, *Hippeastrum* hybrid red, *Ozothamnus diosmifolius* (*Helichrysum diosmifolium*), *Philadelphus lewisii*, and *Salvia sagittata*

The following plants were also shown but couldn't be discussed due to lack of space: *Aechmea glaziovii* 'Alba', *Clematis* hybrids 'Little Nell', 'Huldine', and 'John Paul', *Codiaeum* 'Mamey' (Croton), *Fittonia* 'Red Wing', *Passiflora* 'Ayetala', *Rosa* 'Eden Climber', *Rosa* 'Schoener's Nutkana', and *Salvia clevelandii* 'Wild Red'

Calochortus luteus 'Golden Orb' (Calochortaceae). California. Mariposa Lily. Lemon-yellow flowers with maroon blotches in the throat gaze cheerily up at the gardener who successfully grows this native, but growing any of the *Calochortus* isn't easy. Even in their native habitat, these difficult bulbous perennials often remain dormant for years. Too much water and they rot, too little and they simply peter out. Snails and slugs eat the foliage and gophers eat the bulbs. They generally don't do well on the coast because it doesn't get cold enough (although *Calochortus catalinia* is an exception that coastal gardeners might try.) Generally accepted wisdom is to plant them in a very fast-draining soil and provide no summer water, but Joan points out that many are native to heavy soils which insulate them from summer heat and desiccation and this specimen of *C. luteus* is doing well in her clay soil in the heat of the Valley where she never waters them and they bake in the sun. This is the third year they have come back and they are "blooming their fool heads off." (Joan Citron)

Clematis cirrhosa var. *balearica*. (Ranunculaceae). Balearic Islands. There is some confusion over this plant since the U.S. National Arboretum lists *C. cirrhosa* and *C. balearica* as two separate species, *C. balearica* having a pale yellow flower, and *C. cirrhosa* being an evergreen with yellow-white flowers. However, noted expert Barry Fretwell in his definitive work, **Clematis**, lists *C. balearica* as a variety of *C. cirrhosa* noting that it is stronger than *C. cirrhosa*, with foliage more finely divided. Meanwhile Betsy Clebsch, in an article in the winter 1978-1979 issue of *Pacific Horticulture*, treats them as two different species, noting that *C. balearica* is "distinguished by red spotting within the bracts," but adds that it is "regarded by some

writers as a form of *C. cirrhosa*.” Regardless, this is a marvelous clematis for our Mediterranean climate. Evergreen, and rampant, it’s almost always in flower, according to Susan, but the heaviest bloom is in winter and thus it seems ideal for planting with climbing roses, which would be dormant when it’s at its peak. She is growing it in Manhattan Beach over an entrance gate with a bougainvillea, and insists that it must be placed where one can look up into the small, nodding flowers, the ivory tepals, tinged with green, and deeply speckled with pink. The flowers are followed by attractive puffy seed heads, charming in flower arrangements. (Susan Rudnicki)

Cornus kousa ‘Constellation’ (Cornaceae). Japan, China, Korea. Dogwood. For transplanted Southern Californians who feel it’s not spring unless they have a dogwood flowering in the garden, *C. kousa* is a more reliable choice in our climate than the common dogwood, *C. florida*, which needs a colder winter to do well. *C. kousa* also differs from *C. florida*, which blooms on bare branches, in that *C. kousa* flowers once it’s fully leafed out. A large shrub or small tree, it likes average water, and a rich soil, and prefers to grow in the shade of taller trees where it lights up the darkness with its green and white blooms that are actually a green eye of flowers surrounded by white “petals” that are really bracts. The variegated effect it thus gives would be enhanced by under planting with other shade-loving green and white plants such as variegated hostas, or *Liriope* ‘Silver Dragon.’ In the fall, this dogwood is equally decorative with round red fruit. This specimen is growing at the Huntington Botanical Garden. (Katarina Eriksson)

Gasteria baylissii (Asphodelaceae). South Africa. A perennial succulent with grayish, fleshy leaves arranged in a rosette, this is an easy-to-grow, reliable hybrid that is most notable for its flowers, shaped like little lanterns, in a shade of soft coral striped with green and white. Cathy found this plant at a Cal. State Fullerton plant sale. (Cathy Ratner)

Graptopetalum pentandrum var. *superbum* (Crassulaceae). Displayed in a handsome tan and purple container that nicely duplicated the coloring of its leaves, this perennial succulent, which forms rosettes on short stems, was not quite in flower at the May meeting but when in bloom it’s wreathed in a haze of intricate, star-shaped flowers of creamy-yellow with orangey-red flecks, according to Susan. It needs very fast-draining soil and while this one is growing on a patio table in full sun in Manhattan Beach, inland it would prefer light afternoon shade. All of the roughly 12 species in this genus are good container or rock garden plants. (Susan Rudnicki)

Itea virginica (Iteaceae). Eastern U.S. Sweetspire; Virginia Willow. A graceful, semi-deciduous shrub that will grow anywhere from 3 to 15 feet tall and spreads by suckers to form large clumps, this species wants more winter chill than it normally gets in Southern California. It likes plenty of water and while it will take full sun, it would prefer some afternoon shade. Fragrant, creamy white flowers in semi-erect panicles in summer are followed by fall color when the foliage turns purplish or bright red. (The fact that it was in flower for the May meeting may be due to the fact that it is still in a container.) (Barbara Koenig)

Lotus scoparius (Fabaceae). California. Deerweed. Butterfly expert Margaret Huffman says this is the best butterfly plant in Southern California! A small, arching shrub that grows to about 3' by 3', it provides both a source of food for caterpillars, and later the nectar that butterflies, including the Gray Hairstreak, the Orange Sulfur, and the Funereal Duskywing, feed on. As with most members of the pea family, it has nitrogen-fixing nodules on the roots that help add that nutrient to our nitrogen-deficient soils. Native to California's sunny, arid areas, it wants no water once established and blooms all year. It would be effective planted under a Palo Verde tree, where its yellow flowers, aging to orange, and tiny leaves on long stems would echo the look of the tree. This specimen is growing in Sherman Oaks. (Trish Meyer)

Malacothamnus densiflorus (Malvaceae). Baja to Riverside County. A perennial shrub that likes sun or light shade, this plant is extremely drought-tolerant and spreads by underground runners to move around the garden. "You can't be sure where it will end up," says Trish. "We had two parent plants, both of which bloomed beautifully the first year and then died, but left a circle of babies." While it spreads vigorously, it remains at a reasonable height of about 3 ½'. Trish also noted that unlike many mallows, this one doesn't seem attractive to insects, so the leaves don't get chewed up. The downside is that there's nothing to attract the birds, which she finds all over other mallows cleaning up the bugs. The plant's heaviest bloom is in the spring with typical mallow-type flowers of lilac pink that open up the stalk so that it's in bloom for at least a couple of months. This one is growing in Sherman Oaks. (Trish Meyer)

Purshia plicata (Rosaceae). Mexico's Chihuahua Desert. Arching branches covered with pink cascades of wild-rose type flowers provide a spectacular show for at least a month or more in the spring on this Mexican member of the rose family, and belie just how tough the plant is. A slow-growing shrub to about 4', it's happy in full sun with little or no water. (Bart O'Brien, RSABG)

Rosa 'Madame Alfred Carriere' (Rosaceae). Camellia-shaped, fragrant, white flowers adorn this popular Noisette (Noisettes were the first repeat-blooming rose hybrids, bred in South Carolina around 1812). A climber, it will scramble into a tree or up a support, reaching 20'tall and as wide. It will also take some shade; this rose is growing on the north side of a six-foot wall in Manhattan Beach! It tends to get some mildew, but not enough to be a concern, and, as with most white roses, it's also prone to thrips. As it blooms on established wood, thin out only the oldest canes. Its heaviest bloom is in the spring but as with all Noisettes it will repeat strongly through the season. Clair Martin, in his invaluable book *100 Old Roses for the American Garden*, waxes lyrical about this rose, advising that one plant it where the flowers will be backlit, so that "every bloom will take on the aspect of a miniature Japanese lantern, glowing with an ethereal inner light." (Susan Rudnicki)

Salvia 'Bee's Bliss' (Lamiaceae). California. Bee's Bliss Sage. The name alone would be reason enough to grow this native sage, but it's also of interest since it's a ground cover that requires no care. It flowers in April and May but doesn't have to be

deadheaded, will be happy in sun or part shade, and is very drought tolerant. It's growing in full sun in Claremont. (Bart O'Brien, RSABG)

Salvia greggii x karwinskii (Lamiaceae). California. Riverside Sage. This particular cross was identified by Steve Morgan at the UC Riverside Botanic Gardens where it was growing as a volunteer under a *Salvia greggii* 'Rosea.' While the parentage can't be ascertained with 100 percent certainty, this was his determination based on its location, bloom time, and appearance. Mountain Valley Growers took cuttings with permission and it's now making its way into the trade where it should be popular due to several attractive features. Vase-shaped, it only gets to about 2-3', instead of towering over basketball players, and it takes up no more than 1-2' in width. It also remains upright, instead of flopping over its neighbors, and does not get as woody as most *S. greggii*'s over time. Hummingbirds are, of course, wild about the coral-pink flowers that occur from spring through summer. It will take full sun to part shade and does like some water. This one is growing in Sherman Oaks. (Chris Meyer)

Tillandsia aeranthos x T. meridionalis (Bromeliaceae). South America. Combining the best of both parents, this hybrid has the larger flowers of *T. meridionalis*, with the dramatic coloring—purple flowers and bright red bracts—of *T. aeranthos*. Cathy got hers from tillandsia aficionado Bill Baker and notes that it multiplies fast. She has some growing on driftwood and others wired on trees and shrubs. (Cathy notes that the "silver/grey" tillandsias should never be planted in containers but instead given epiphytic conditions.) It's a reliable bloomer for her, in part because her location on the coast provides it with the heavy fogs and humid winds that it loves. She waters hers once a week but says she probably wouldn't have to as they get enough moisture from the sea-laden air. Hers are also in nearly full sun, but inland they need some shade. (Cathy Ratner)

Trifolium amoenum (Fabaceae). California. Showy Clover. No disparaging remarks about invasive clovers around this rare native, please! An annual that blooms in spring, Showy Clover is from the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden (RSABG) where it's growing in partial shade . . . and that's one of the very few places it *is* growing. The pretty clover seems to be going the way of the dinosaurs as only one plant has been seen in the wild since 1967, according to Bart, who says that about mid-century it mysteriously "just disappeared." RSABG is now in the process of building up a seed supply for conservation and research purposes. (Bart O'Brien, RSABG)

- Edited by Jill Vig