

JANUARY 2006 PLANT FORUM NOTES

Thank you to all who brought plants to the January 2006 meeting! Special thanks to Tom Nuccio for bringing in so many luscious *Vireya Rhododendron* blooms – they were amazing, and many were fragrant! 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, described (or listed) in the Society’s **Selected Plants for Southern California Gardens**, were shown: *Chaenomeles japonica*, *Homalocladium platycladum*, *Iresine herbstii*, *Kalanchoe synsepala*, *Lachenalia aloides*, *Lachenalia reflexa*, *Leucosium aestivum* var. *gravetye* ‘Gravetye Giant’, and *Salvia gesneraeflora*.

The identity of the following plants could not be completely ascertained: *Rhododendron* ‘Jock’s Cairn’ (some said the identification of this plant may not be correct), it was agreed that the plant shown as *Rhododendron laetum* was not that species, *Rhododendron* sp. (a small *Vireya*, grown in container for a few years – not flowering), *Salvia* sp. – with maroon flowers and pineapple scented foliage, plant 6 feet tall, and a *Saponaria* that is likely either *S. ocymoides* or *S. officinalis*.

The following plants were also shown but are not described in the Society’s **Selected Plants for Southern California Gardens**:

Barleria oenotheroides – formerly *B. micans* (Acanthaceae). Giant Yellow Shrimp Plant. From southern Mexico to Colombia. This evergreen shrub reaches from 2 to 4 feet in height and has a similar spread. Terminal densely packed inflorescences are spikes and vary from 1/2 to 6 inches or so in length. A typical flower has 5 petals, the upper 4 are reflexed and the lower is positioned straight forward. Flowers are yellow, but this varies considerably from pale cream to bright yellow. Leaves may reach up to 5 inches in length and are opposite, obovate to lanceolate, and vary from grey green to bright green in color. This plant has an interesting biogeographic story – of the roughly 300 species of *Barleria*, this is the only one that is found in the New World. For many years it was thought to be an endemic species of the New World, but recent work has shown that it is conspecific with a species in tropical West Africa. As such, it is the only member of the family Acanthaceae that is thought to be native to both the New and Old World. The genus name *Barleria* honors Jacques Barrelier a 17th century French botanist. Kathleen notes that this plant is sold at WorldWide Exotics. It is also available from Kartuz. (Kathleen Brown)

Cymbidium tracyanum (Orchidaceae). China, Myanmar (Burma), and Thailand. Evergreen geophytic perennial terrestrial orchid. Foliage and pseudobulbs look like the familiar cymbidiums, but the flowers are spectacularly different. Flowering stems appear from late fall through winter. An inflorescence can be over 4 feet long and is typically densely covered with individual flowers that are up to 6 inches across. Each flower has a parchment colored base and is liberally patterned with rich brown markings. This is one of the fragrant species of *Cymbidium*.

Typical outdoor *Cymbidium* culture. Steve notes that the plant can be divided by the “throw-down” method – where one throws the plant down on the ground and then pots up the various pieces. His plant is growing in Eagle Rock. This plant is sold at Orchid Estates in Santa Barbara. (Steve Gerischer)

Echium ‘David Verity’ (Boraginaceae). David Verity Echium. Evergreen shrub, looking like a smaller, sparser, green foliated pride of Maderia – but with smaller and more open inflorescences carrying numerous white flowers that are variously blushed with pink or blue. The specimen shown was about 3 feet tall and equally wide. Dick noted that this very attractive plant began flowering in December, and that the flowers dry purple. He grows the plant in full sun to partial shade. We don’t know much about this plant, and Dave unfortunately wasn’t at this meeting. The plant is sold at Buena Creek Gardens. (Dick Kohlschreiber / South Coast Botanic Garden)



Leucadendron salignum ‘Chief’ (Proteaceae). No common name. The species is from South Africa. Evergreen shrub. This one appears to be smaller than many, though I have been unable to find much information about this cultivar. It has reddish stems, yellow bracts, and short narrow leathery entire leaves. Kathleen notes that this plant is available at Armstrong Garden Centers. (Kathleen Brown)

Passiflora macrophylla (Passifloraceae). Tree Passionflower, Granadilla de Monte. Ecuador. Small evergreen tree or large shrub from 10 to 18 feet tall. This plant is especially noteworthy for its enormous simple leaves that can be over 3 feet long. Flowers are about 2 inches across and vary in color from greenish yellow to white and are produced in clusters of 1 to 12. Roundish fruits are greenish and are about 1 and 1/2 inches across. The species was described in 1883. Jorge noted that this is the first blooming specimen of this rare plant to be shown in California. He is growing it in a greenhouse in Long Beach. (Jorge Ochoa)

The following flowers of Vireya Rhododendrons were shown: *Rhododendron* ‘Avalon’, *Rhododendron* ‘Christo Rey’, *Rhododendron* ‘Coral Flare’, *Rhododendron* ‘Eggnog’, *Rhododendron* ‘Elizabeth Ann Seton’, *Rhododendron* ‘George Budgen’, *Rhododendron* ‘Just Peachy’, *Rhododendron* ‘Lucie Sorensen’ (tiny leaves and tiny orange flowers), *Rhododendron* ‘Mount Pire’, *Rhododendron* ‘Narnia’, *Rhododendron* ‘Princess Alexandra’, *Rhododendron* ‘Silver Thimbles’ (not as tiny as ‘Lucie Sorensen’ but quite small, white flowers with pink center – most noticeable on the outside of the petals), *Rhododendron* ‘Sirunki Lake’, and *Rhododendron* ‘W. B. Orange’ (*R. wrightianum* x ‘Belisar’). All of the above were brought in by Tom Nuccio of Nuccio’s Nurseries in Altadena.

Three other flowering Vireya Rhododendrons were also displayed: *Rhododendron* ‘Moonwood’, *Rhododendron* ‘Pink Parfait’, and *Rhododendron* ‘Moonwood’ x *Rhododendron goodenoughii*.

– Edited by Bart O’Brien