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GREEN SHEET

# Southern California Horticultural Society

**AUGUST 2006 PLANT FORUM NOTES**

*Compiled by Susan C. Eubank*

Thank you to all who brought plants to the August 2006 meeting! 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** (2000), were shown: *Arum italicum*, *Billbergia x windii*, *Callistemon citrinus*, *Erythrina humeana*, *Hamelia patens*, *Justicia brandegeana*, *Justicia* ‘Fruit Salad’, *Pachystachys lutea*, *Pittosporum angustifolium*, *Plumeria* spp. & cvs. *Talinum paniculatum*, *Tillandsia cacticola*, and *Vitex agnus-castus*.

Information in this article was gleaned and condensed from numerous internet sites and sources at the Arboretum Library at the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden.

*Acer pentaphyllum* (Aceraceae)

Displayed by Paul R. Martin

It was discovered by plant explorer, Joseph Rock, in 1929 in China at an elevation of 10,000 feet. The seed was brought to the west to UC Berkeley Botanic Garden and either trees or seeds were given to San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum by UC Berkeley. Three trees grew at Strybing although all had died by 1991. Toichi Domoto, a local bay area nurseryman and maple enthusiast, grafted scions from the Strybing trees onto sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*). One of those trees may have ended up at Western Hills Nursery in Occidental, California. The tree is a beautiful specimen about 20 feet tall with the delicacy of a Japanese maple, but with distinctive 5-leaflet “marijuana-like” leaves. It grows in the middle of the nursery shading the sales area. It sets seed which are true to type and the plant brought for the Plant Forum is one of those seedlings. The fall foliage is red or orange, but the plant hasn’t been here for fall yet, so the fall color is unknown. It is very late to leaf out in the spring.

*Aechmea recurvata* ‘Aztec Gold’ (also known as ‘Aztec’) (Bromeliaceae)

Displayed by Victor Guzman

John (“Jack”) Catlin developed ‘Aztec Gold’ from a chance seedling of his found by Ian Sellars. The plant was selected because one of its leaves had a “good clear yellow stripe.” The plant on display was fully mature, but hadn’t flowered that year. By growing the original plant on its side, pups grew at the site of the variegated leaf. The leaves start out plain yellow, but develop later as variegated. The plant does well in a sub-tropical climate and frost can produce spectacular flowers. It will grow in hanging baskets with plenty of light or on a wire bench in full sun.



*Agapanthus* 'Elaine' (Agapanthaceae)

Displayed by J. Catlin

This plant was introduced in 1990 by the Los Angeles County Arboretum and patented by Archie Armate of Superior Nursery in Gardena. It is a vigorous 24"-30" plant with dark violet/blue flowers with 4 to 4.5 foot tall flower stalks. The inflorescence is 8 inches across. The plant is a cross from another Arboretum introduction, *A.* 'Mood Indigo'.

*Cirsium japonicum* 'Pink and Rose Beauty' (Asteraceae)

Displayed by Jane Coogan Beer

This is a perennial thistle native to Japan that has been introduced to gardeners by Thompson & Morgan after becoming popular as a cut flower. It has many globe-like flowers of soft pink and rose-red from late summer to autumn. The plants are up to 5 feet tall and are easy to grow. They offer small, mid-green foliage that is less thorny than other thistles. This plant may be invasive here.



*Passiflora laurifolia* (Passifloraceae ) Water Lemon

Displayed by Jorge Ochoa

This plant is one of the best passionfruits. It has many common names throughout the world. The plant is a vigorous climber to 32 feet. The flowers are solitary and fragrant. The fruit is orange-yellow and pleasantly rose-scented with an agreeable, subacid flavor. It is native to tropical America. The plant is cultivated in the Caribbean, as well as Asia and southeast Asia. Cross pollination is required for good crops and a warm, dry atmosphere helps. The fruit is eaten by making a hole in the end of the fruit and sucking out the pulp and seeds. The strained pulp also makes an excellent beverage.

*Ratibida columnifera* 'Red Midget' (Asteraceae) Red Midget Mexican Hat

Displayed by Cathy Ratner

'Red Midget' is a true dwarf cultivar of Mexican Hat which grows to only 15" instead of the 3-4 feet of the species. It has long black cone heads and the grey-green fern-like foliage compliments the dark red, reflexed petals that are trimmed in yellow. Red Mexican Hat likes rich soils and needs good drainage. The species is native to prairies and open waste ground throughout the Great Plains. It tends to flop in heavy soil and with heavy watering. The seeds make good bird food. This plant came from Bluestone Perennials.

- Photographs by Wendy Gault