

## WHS Plant Notes for May 2012

### *Calycanthus occidentalis* (Calycanthaceae) Western Spicebush

Grown by Janet Hoffmann in Campbell: This is a large, billowy, deciduous shrub native to mountain foothills of northern and central California. It lives in moist places in forests and woodlands. It will grow quickly to about 5 to 10 ft tall or more with a dense, round form. It has large, glossy, bright green leaves that turn pale gold before dropping in autumn. It produces its interesting flowers from late spring to fall. They are red, bordering on maroon, and look a little like small, 1- to 2-in.-wide water lilies. They and the crushed foliage have a spicy fragrance that isn't exactly pleasant until you associate it with old wine barrels. This is an easy, fast-growing shrub that performs best in part to full shade with regular irrigation. It's very tolerant of clay soil. It makes a great screen or hedge and several sources suggest trimming it up as a multi-stemmed, small tree. After it's established, it will spread by rhizomes and form a thicket unless controlled. Janet hasn't had that problem with hers and thinks it might be thanks to having it on drip irrigation.

### *Carpenteria californica* (Hydrangeaceae) Bush Anemone

Grown by Judy Wong in Menlo Park: In the wild, this rare native shrub is found only in scattered colonies limited to a small area of the Sierra foothills east of Fresno. It is more abundant in English gardens where it has been appreciated since the early 1900's. It's evergreen with leathery, dark green leaves about 5 in. long with rolled margins. The beautiful flowers bloom in late spring and early summer in clusters at the tips of year-old shoots. They are about 2 or 3 in. across, bright white, with a prominent, central cluster of yellow stamens and are lightly fragrant. Bees love their pollen. They grow 5 to 10 ft tall with ivory and tan bark that shreds and peels with age. They will thrive in any soil and in full sun to light shade. They bloom more profusely in full sun but will tolerate it only where summer temperatures are moderate. They need occasional deep irrigation to develop their best form, leaf color and flowering. They will survive drought but look miserable, and the resulting gangly, unattractive form may not be correctable. The old, dead leaves and remnants of the flower clusters and seed pods hang on forever and have to be removed by force, but it's beautiful enough to deserve this extra bit of grooming.

### *Deutzia x hybrida* 'Monzia' (Hydrangeaceae) Pink-A-Boo Deutzia

Grown by Janet Hoffmann: Monrovia introduced this beautiful hybrid *Deutzia*. It's a multi-stemmed, fountain-shaped shrub about 6 to 8 ft tall and 6 ft wide. It's spectacular in spring when it's covered with large, pendant clusters of starry, rose-pink flowers with white margins. They bloom on year-old wood so the shrubs need to be pruned as soon as the flowers fade. The large, attractive leaves are lance-shaped, lime green and deciduous. It's easy to grow in any well-draining soil with regular irrigation in full sun to light shade. It's outstanding used as an informal hedge.

### *Hymenosporum flavum* (Pittosporaceae) Sweet Shade, Queensland Frangipani

Grown by Katie Wong in San Jose: This is a graceful, tidy, evergreen tree that's perfect for smaller gardens. It's native to rainforests along most of Australia's eastern coast and over into New Guinea. It has an open, upright, slender habit. It tends to grow with horizontal branches in spaced whorls of three with their leaves clustered toward the ends. The leaves, which resemble pittosporum, are glossy, dark green and about 6 in. long. From spring into summer, it's covered with large, showy clusters of tubular flowers with 5 spreading lobes. They open pale cream and quickly age to deep, golden yellow. They have a wonderful fragrance similar to plumerias. It has been grown successfully in California since 1900 and often used as street trees. It prefers moist, humus-rich, well-drained soil but is adaptable to most soils and tolerant of some dryness. It grows well in sun to light shade but blooms best in full sun. It's known to have survived temperatures

down to 20 F. Depending on conditions, you can expect it to grow 15 to 40 ft tall and about half as wide. Some early training is important to create a sturdy, well-structured tree.

#### ***Leucospermum*** (Proteaceae) Pincushion

Grown by Roberta Barnes in Los Altos: Roberta is successfully growing several of these striking plants with the reputation of being difficult. Her largest one is about 4 ft tall now.

Leucospermums are woody, evergreen shrubs native to South Africa with most coming from the summer dry Western Cape. Their flowers are borne in large, tight clusters with their protruding styles creating the pincushion look. *L. cuneiforme*, Wart-Stemmed Pincushion, is perhaps the most adaptable of all the leucospermums. In nature, it grows in a wide variety of habitats and climates, but always on soil derived from sandstone or stabilized coastal sand. It's a sturdy shrub, 4 to 6 ft tall and wide, with warty stems clothed with green, leathery, wedge-shaped leaves. It blooms winter into spring with beautiful, 3- to 4-in.-wide, yellow flowerheads that age to orange and finally red. The Plantzafrica website says it wants very well-draining, acidic, lean soil in full sun, that it's very sensitive to strong fertilizers, and that it can handle summer drought but is best with moderate irrigation. It should be hardy to a few degrees below freezing. Roberta also showed a couple of hybrids. '**Red Ribbons**' has flower parts that look like shiny, silk ribbon and have white hairs that give the flowerhead a beautiful frosted look. '**Spider**' has gray green foliage and pink flowerheads that age to red.

#### ***Mimulus*** '**Eleanor**' (Phrymaceae) Shrubby Monkeyflower

Grown by Judy Wong: 'Eleanor' is one of the best of the many cultivars of shrubby monkeyflower. It originated at Yerba Buena Nursery and was named for one of their former employees. It makes a nice, dense mound with narrow, shiny, dark green leaves. It grows about 3 ft tall and wide and looks good even when out of bloom. It blooms from late spring through summer with large, butter yellow flowers edged with white. 'Eleanor' is reliably easy, durable and longer-lived than most shrubby monkeyflowers. It's adaptable to any soil in full sun to light shade. It will accept regular irrigation if the soil drains well and can survive drought but will look terrible doing it. Like most other shrubby monkeyflowers, it will look and perform best with occasional deep irrigation and protection from hot afternoon sun. Light pruning or pinching is needed to keep them looking good. Hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees love shrubby monkeyflowers—deer, rabbits, and ground squirrels do not.

#### ***Styrax redivivus*** (Styraceae) Snowdrop Bush

Grown by Jean Struthers in Los Altos Hills: Snowdrop is a quietly elegant, deciduous shrub that occurs sporadically throughout the state growing in many habitats from chaparral to forests, on a variety of soils including serpentine, and in full sun to shade. It's very slow to mature but worth the wait as it grows into a graceful, multi-stemmed shrub from 6 to 12 ft tall. Their pretty, dark green leaves are nearly round, about 2 in. long and a little widely spaced creating a delicate, open appearance. They turn golden yellow in autumn. An abundance of waxy, white bells with brushes of golden stamens nod in clusters under the branches in late spring. In the garden, they accept most soils with good drainage, bloom best in full sun but are happy in bright shade, and tolerate drought but definitely appreciate occasional deep irrigation. Snowdrop is a great container plant. It will thrive and bloom with its roots bound up in the same container year after year after year.

~Jackie Doda~

Resources: *Am. Hort. Soc. A-Z Encyclopedia, Botanica, California Native Plants for the Garden, Complete Garden Guide to the Native Shrubs of California, Flora, Native Treasures, Sunset Western Garden Book*, and many websites.