

April 2017 Plant Notes

John Hall from Los Altos brought:

Myrrhinium atropurpureum (Sweet flower) - This evergreen Brazilian plant can be a large shrub or a small tree. Sherry Austin gave it to him 15 years ago and it is now 12' tall. The opposite light green leaves are elliptical and have smooth margins. Red flowers start appearing in the spring and the petals are edible (taste like guava with some imagination). It needs very little water. It is hardy to 28°. It root sprouts, so if you want some you can go to his house and he'll dig some up for you.

Patricia Knight from Los Altos Hills brought:

x Chiranthofremontia lenzii 'Griff's Wonder' - This evergreen tree grows in full sun and well-drained soil. It is a cross between *Chiranthodendron pendadactylon* and *Fremontodendron 'Pacific Sunset'* that was done at Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden in 1981. The ultimate size is unknown but may be 35-40' tall and wide. Patricia bought a 1-gallon plant in 2004 and it is now well over 20' tall. Although it prefers some summer irrigation Patricia has not given her tree any supplemental watering (it has only received rain water). Birds go crazy for the nectar rich orange blossoms, which appear from January thru May. Her tree is smothered in blooms right now. Patricia brought her leaf sample in a plastic bag because the fine brown hairs (trichomes) on the leaves can cause skin irritation for some people. It is recommended that this tree be grown as a multi-trunked specimen or as an espalier, because many of the single trunked trees have tipped over because their weak root system has not been able to handle the weight of all of the blossoms

Janet Hoffmann from Campbell brought:

Homeria collina or Moraea collina (Cape iris) - This deciduous South African bulb grows in full or part sun in clay or well-drained soil (zones 9-11). It is very easy to grow; she put it in the ground 10 years ago and forgot about it. Now it is a very big clump (since it has spread). She gives it no extra water. The 3" salmon or yellow 6-petaled flowers start appearing in the spring and have a light fragrance to them. Even though they only last one day, buds keep opening for many weeks.

Solanum wallecii (Wallace's nightshade, Catalina nightshade, Northern island nightshade) - This Santa Catalina native is a sprawling evergreen perennial that grows in full or part sun (zones 7-10) in clay or well-drained soil. Just like the *H. collina* it is easy to grow, Janet put it in the ground 3 years ago and forgot about it. Now it is 2' tall and has a spreading habit. Janet is growing it in partial shade and does not give it any additional water. With more water it can grow up to 4' tall and spread widely. It has pretty purple flowers with a nice center that is almost baby blue. Her plant is covered with flowers right now and continues to bloom through the summer. All parts of the plant, including the blue-black berries are poisonous.

Chionanthus retusus (Chinese fringe tree) - This deciduous tree grows in full or part sun (zones 5-9) in clay or well-drained soil. It grows to 20' tall and has attractive gray-brown bark. The 4" long leathery leaves are ovate to elliptical and have serrated margins. The tops of the leaves are bright green, but the underside has a white green downy appearance. The fragrant

4” fringe-like white blossoms appear in the spring and bloom for three weeks. Her tree is covered with flowers right now

Katie Wong from San Jose brought:

Scleranthus biflorus (Australian astroturf) – The emerald green groundcover feels like a carpet. It grows in full or part sun (zones 9-11) in well-drained, sandy or rocky soil. With regular water it will keep growing and widening (since it is an alpine plant it is used to having plenty of moisture from rain or snow melt). It is hardy to 32°.

Judy Wong from Menlo Park brought:

Streptosolen jamesonii (Marmalade bush) – Judy really likes this South American evergreen shrub that grows in full to part sun (zones 9-11) in well-drained soil. Her plant is 4’ tall but it can get to be 6’ tall and just as wide. It has oval bright green leaves. The multi-colored blossoms appear in the spring and may bloom for up to 18 months. Her plant is in full bloom right now. It needs to be protected from frost in the winter

~Ana Muir