



Bermuda Botanical Society

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SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER 2015

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Now the weather is turning cooler again it is time to do some planning for the Bermuda Botanical Society.

After some consideration we have decided to proceed with our annual plant sale, which is planned for Saturday, October 31st at the Botanical Garden. Please have a look around your garden and select some plants that you may have in pots for the sale. Seeds and slips are also welcome.

November will be time for the AGM planned for Tuesday, November 17th at 6 pm. If the Bermuda Botanical Society is to survive we need some fresh faces on the Executive Committee. Please try to find some time to help out in any capacity.

December 5th will be the date for our Christmas party and I look forward to sharing some Christmas cheer with you all.

Our page on Facebook is proving to be interesting and successful and I hope you are regular visitors and contributors.

The Visitors' Centre has a new café so please go and have a taste. This would also be a good opportunity to visit the little gift shop, where you will all kind of interesting little gifts.

Looking forward to seeing you all in the near future

Marijke Peterich

The Botanical Gardens has a new Facebook page address - it is <https://www.facebook.com/bdabotanicalgardens> Find out what's happening botanical-wise in the Gardens, along with any special events. One of the gardeners is providing most of the photos and Jennifer Flood is adding information.



SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS 2015



From left: Marijke Peterich, President
George Peterich, Scholarship Committee
Kahnae Bean, Scholarship winner
Helle Patterson, Scholarship Committee
Leonora Carter, mother of Scholarship winner Hutson Carter
Peter Lee, Chairman of Scholarship Committee

Trivium #13

Epitheton

The scientific name of a plant is in principle made up of two parts: the genus and the species. The species is an epithet to the genus, that is an addition that further describes the plant. The word epithet comes from the Greek word epitheton. To give a classic example:

Achilles, the great warrior. The great warrior is the epitheton.

NANDINA DOMESTICA OR HEAVENLY BAMBOO

BY MARIJKE PETERICH

This plant is not a bamboo but belongs to the family of the Berberidaceae and is from Japan. It is drought and cold resistant. The small white flowers are followed by red berries, which are poisonous. The new growth is reddish.

It is an elegant small bush, tall rather than wide, and especially good for a small garden. There are several cultivars, but not in Bermuda, as far as I know.

It tolerates shade and poor soil. When grown in full sun it will need a richer soil.



SOMBREROS

GEORGE'S HAT ODYSSEY

There are many different types of sun hats, and there is a lot to say about them. Let's start with the Spanish word for hat: it is *sombrero*. It is derived from the word *sombra* – Spanish for shade or shadow. Hats are meant to keep the head in the shade, shielded off from the burning rays of the sun.

I got my first sun hat in Italy. It must have been in the Holy Year – 1950. It was made of raffia. Many years later I found out where raffia came from. It is from the raffia palm (see my picture and article in the BBS newsletter some years ago). In the meantime I had visited Ecuador and found the finest hats imaginable – the real Panamas! I bought two – one for myself and one for my father-in-law, who had a

place in Spain. These hats came rolled up in chic balsa wood boxes (also a local product). I wanted to know what were the plants that produced the fibre that was used to fabricate these fine hats, and I was told “paja toquilla”. Paja is Spanish for straw and I tried to find out what kind of straw this toquilla was. It was some kind of palm I was told, but I could not find out what it was.

It is said that Panama hats got their name because they were supplied to the people, who built the Panama Canal. This has been contested, but it is still a good story. One thing is certain: most Panama hats are not made in Panama.

These hats are so popular because they are so pliable. In fact it is a test for quality: only the best can actually be rolled up. The finer the strands, the better the quality, and also the longer the hat will last. So the very best hats are made with the finest strands and the thinner the strands the longer it takes to produce a hat.

I really developed a taste for lightweight sun hats when I moved to Bermuda. There was a shop in New York where I could get what I needed. There were Panamas in various qualities (some so expensive they were kept in locked show cases) and also the very elegant Italian made hats, made of some grass that is called Baku. They have an extremely fine weave, but they are not pliable and therefore not so durable.

Going on several trips to Mexico I finally discovered another source for Panama hats. A shop in the town of Campeche on the Yucatan peninsula had quite a variety of them and I bought a few.

(Avid readers of this newsletter may remember that I wrote about Campeche before: it has the smallest Botanical Garden in the world, called Xmuch'haltun!) But the best was that I found out that these Panama hats were made close by in the town of Becal, only a few hours' drive away. In the centre of that town there is a fountain with three enormous concrete hats celebrating the industry.



The fibres have to be soft, and the cave provides the necessary humidity. Campeche is very dry in the winter months (the fountain had no water). I am sure that in the coastal area of Ecuador the weaving is done above ground. People in Campeche use the word Paja toquilla, but also called it Jipi Japa.

I bought a superb hat in a shop there and we found a local hat maker. This man took us down some steps into a man-made cave, where he showed us how a hat is woven.



Back in Bermuda I finally found out what Paja toquilla is. The Internet told me that it looks like a young palm but it is a totally different plant. It can be found in a tropical environment with marshy soil. The scientific name is *Carludovica palmata*.

TRIVIUM #14

When the flowers of the Moon Vine *Ipomoea alba* close, those of the Morning Glory *Ipomoea indica* open.

NOT IN MY BACK YARD

BY NIGEL CHUDLEIGH

As a Botanical Society, one of our purposes is to promote the culture of Bermuda's indigenous flora.

Yet not all of our native and endemic plants are desirable. Clearly, one native that no one would want anywhere near their home is the Poison Ivy, *Toxicodendron radicans*.

Another native, less well known, and not toxic like Poison Ivy, is the West Indian Cissus, *Cissus sicyiodes*. This plant appeared in our garden some years ago and I have been fighting with it, on and off, ever since.



Flower clusters.

The *Bermuda Plantfinder* describes the W.I. Cissus as a native climbing vine aggressively capable of smothering small trees.



W.I. Cissus smothering Spanish Bayonet plants

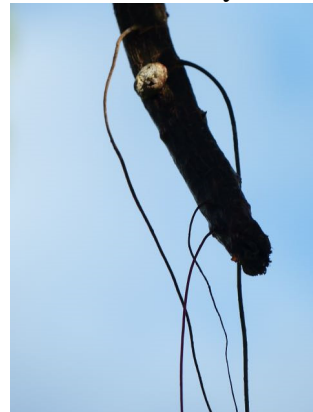
But that is not the whole story. Not only does the vine grow up and over any plant or structure that it encounters, it also puts out runners that can extend twenty yards or more

along the ground, going skywards once it finds something to climb up.

With most unwanted vines one would expect that, by cutting through the rising stems, the vines in the host canopy would wither and perish. Not so with the W.I. Cissus.

If one tries to pull the vines from the canopy, they invariably break off, leaving lengths of stem in a state of suspended vitality. These stems eventually start to put out threadlike aerial roots that drop vertically until they reach the ground. There they promptly branch out into the soil and the hitherto aerial roots commence to thicken up as restored sustaining stems!

If the aerial roots are pulled off, they can regrow down to the ground in as little as a week or so. And they seem able to go on regrowing almost indefinitely.



Broken off stem putting out aerial roots.

In spite of the grief this vine has given me, one has to marvel at its ability to adapt and survive.

The W.I. Cissus propagates itself vegetatively from the runners and also the small creamy clusters of flowers produce small black seeds, which are probably distributed by birds.

If you encounter this vine in your garden, I would advise prompt eradication!

MADEIRA VINE ETC.

BY LISA GREENE

Anredera baselloides (formerly *Boussingaultia baselloides*)

It's not known when the Madeira vine was introduced to Bermuda but it was described scientifically in 1888, so it's unlikely to have been introduced to Bermuda before then. It was here before 1918 though because it was included in N.L. Britton's "Flora of Bermuda". Interestingly, he wrote that it was in thickets and walls and had escaped from cultivation and was naturalized. It was my impression that it was not terribly common, but I am now seeing more and more of it every year. If it were in my garden, I would be keeping a very close eye on it (if I didn't take it out altogether).



The heart-shaped leaves are fleshy, one to four inches long. The tiny, nearly-white flowers are borne in the summer and autumn in spikes and have a lovely fragrance. The tubers, from which the plant readily grows, can reach the size of a loaf of bread!

FACEBOOK

Alison Copeland posted an interesting link on the Society's Facebook page*. One of the species mentioned was *Albizia julibrissin*. This species, commonly known as the silk tree, is in Fabaceae (the pea and bean family) and

has foliage similar to Royal Poinciana but smaller and more delicate. The flowers are like coral-pink powder-puffs. According to the Bermuda Jubilee Garden the tree was introduced to Bermuda "in recent years" which may have been the 1960s since the book was published in 1971. If I remember correctly there is a specimen of it in the Botanical Gardens behind the main office of the Dept. of Environmental Protection where the trellis and slathouse intersect. If you know of other specimens, I'd like to know. Please email me at elgreene@ibl.bm.

*You don't need to have your own Facebook Page in order to look at the Society's page. Just go to your browser and type in "Bermuda Botanical Society Facebook" and it should come up. Once you're on the page, you will see Botanical Society posts on the right hand side; if you look on the left side of the page and scroll down, you'll see Visitor's Posts. Click on the date (grey) and it will open the visitor post for you. Society posts in recent months include photos and notes on: Oleander, Frangipani, Rosemary, Palmetto, Asparagus fern, Woodland passionflower (invasive?) and Poinciana.

Sea squill or sea onion (*Drimys maritima*), featured in a previous newsletter (Nov. 2012), is sending up its flowers spikes now, so if you have something strange emerging from bulbs (or seemingly from the grass) in your garden, it may be this. After writing the article in 2012, I was given some bulbs from Mrs. Downing in Somerset. Just a few weeks ago, nearly three years later, a friend in Somerset showed me a photo of a "mystery" plant which turned out to be sea squill and, since then, another friend has identified it in his mother's garden. Perhaps it's in your garden!

BOURGES

BY JENNIFER FLOOD

A visit to Bourges - capital and Cathedral town of the province of Berry, central France, led to a delightful walk through an unusual community garden site nestled in 135 hectares of marshland. Took a bit of finding - the directions to the main entrance were easy enough but the gate was firmly locked and the ladies having lunch in the Marais Community hall firstly were surprised to find the way barred, and then couldn't agree on where to direct us! (all well beyond my limited French vocabulary!) However, we persevered, finding a somewhat secretive entrance further down the road. Marshworkers began cultivating the marshy area in the 17C creating a lattice work of canals separating the man-made islands on which fruit and vegetables were grown for the then thriving medieval city. Three walks take the visitor on different routes along the wooded, shady banks of the canals. A peaceful, enchanting world unfolds.

In contrast to the pastoral scenes, the immense Cathedral (a UNESCO World Heritage site) which overlooks the marshes, and provides a stunning view of the town, has very formal, geometric, attractive, colour-splashed gardens.



Bermuda Botanical Society

Plant sale

Jack King Building, Botanical Garden



Save the date

Saturday, October 31st

Time 9 am – 12 noon
8:30 am for Members

Jack King Building
Bermuda Botanical Garden

Trees, bushes, flowers,
natives and endemics





Bermuda Botanical Society

P.O. Box HM 2116, Hamilton, HM JX, Bermuda
botanicalmembership@gmail.com

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

Our Goals: To encourage & support the botanical sciences within the community

Your membership contribution is important to us. It helps the Society to further our goals

We support the following programmes:

- **SCHOLARSHIP FUND** To assist Bermuda's horticultural students
- **LECTURES, WORKSHOPS & TOURS** A winter/spring programme on botanical themes to educate and inform our members and guests

As a member of the Society, you will receive the following benefits:

- **QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER** with news of the Society and advance notice of events
- **DISCOUNT** on lectures and tours
- **MEMBERS' DISCOUNT** at Brighton Nursery (membership card required)
- **MEMBERS' DISCOUNT** at The Animal & Garden House (membership card required)

PLEASE SHOW YOUR SUPPORT & RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP BY COMPLETING THE FORM BELOW. THANK YOU!

1) PERSONAL DETAILS

New Member: ☐ *Renewal:* ☐

Name: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss (please print) _____

Mailing Address: (required only for new members or change of address) _____

Home Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____ **Work Phone:** _____

E-mail Address: _____

2) FEES & DONATIONS

☐ \$5 SENIOR

☐ \$5 JUNIOR

☐ \$10 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

☐ \$20 FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

☐ \$500 LIFE MEMBERSHIP

☐ \$1,000 CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

PERSONAL DONATION AMOUNT: \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT PAID: \$ _____

3) PAYMENT METHOD

☐ **CASH ENCLOSED**

☐ **CHEQUE ENCLOSED** (Please make payable to the Bermuda Botanical Society)

☐ **DIRECT DEPOSIT** (BNTB a/c #20-006-060-897188-100)

FOR OUR RECORDS:

Payment Rec'd: _____ Date card issued _____ Entered in D/B _____

UPCOMING EVENTS:

SATURDAY, 31ST OCT

ANNUAL PLANT SALE

JACK KING BUILDING

BOTANICAL GARDENS

8:30 AM

MEMBERS ONLY

9:00 – 12 NOON

GENERAL PUBLIC

SATURDAY, 5TH DEC

BBS CHRISTMAS PARTY

6:00 PM

VISITORS' CENTRE

BOTANICAL GARDENS