

Geraniamania

Planting Since 1972



A Publication of the San Diego Geranium Society
The San Diego Geranium Society meets the Second
Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., in Room 101 of the
Casa Del Prado in Balboa Park.
Meetings are Free! All Welcome!

Presidents Message

Let's celebrate the 44th Birthday of the San Diego Geranium Society with a potluck! Did you know it all started at the San Diego County Fair back in 1972? Our founder, Phil Bush had a display at the Fair, and left a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in forming a geranium club - and the rest is history!

Jean and I worked the Fair on Father's Day, along with the invaluable help of the Roberts. We had a small table set up in the garden section of the Fair. Although crowds were light, we had an excellent time - thank you Ron and Clair! We were rewarded by being invited back to the Awards Ceremony breakfast on July 3rd.

The Fair wants us back next year. We always get to meet some very interesting flower/plant enthusiasts, we get free tickets to the Fair - and it's great exposure for the Geranium Society!

We have a very special speaker this month. Michael Ludwig is the "L" in KOLZ Begonia Research Center located in his home in Lemon Grove. He is also the President of the Exotic Garden Club, and is the most knowledgeable person I know regarding any kind of plant. If you have a question on *any* plant he has the answer!

Jack Ohmstede

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July Meeting

July 12th @ 6:30pm

Please note that we will be starting EARLY this meeting because of our potluck celebration!

If you can get to the Park before 6:00, we always need help setting up the tables for dinner.

Please bring something to share that will serve 8.



Don't forget to -

Bring Cuttings from your Garden -
Bring a plant for "Show and Tell"

Photos from our Facebook Page



Sharon Louise



Potter Heigham



Ingrid/Grycksbo



Carlton Carnival



Helen Hockey



A PASSION FOR PELARGONIUMS

These six unique varieties of pelargoniums are quite rare and mysterious—and worth tracking down.

By Susan Heeger/Garden Design Magazine

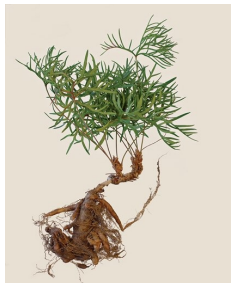
Photos by Marion Brenner

To lose your heart to pelargoniums, you must first know they're not geraniums (the two are often confused). Nor are all of them splashy, red hybrids—those common pelargoniums can be found in countless backyards. No, the path to obsession is to know that some examples of this plant—like the ones on this page—are quite rare and mysterious. With thick, rough roots and knobby stems that sprout fine leaves and small blooms worth studying up close, some pelargoniums can look like Japanese bonsais or desert shrubs. Mostly native to South Africa, “pellies” are exquisitely attuned to the demands of their former home.

P. cotyledonis - Because of roaming goats, this species is endangered on its native St. Helena, an island off the coast of West Africa. Resembling a Lilliputian tree with heart-shape leaves, it blooms white from spring into summer and appreciates a bit of summer shade.



P. cotyledonis



P. caffrum

Pelargonium caffrum, which hails from the coastal hills of the Eastern Cape, develops extra-long flower stems that push through the grasses. Meanwhile, **P. crithmifolium** wraps a veil around itself after blooming to discourage browsing animals. Others have night-scented flowers that beckon nocturnal pollinators or ample blue-gray leaves that ward off salty sea spray. Ranging from a few inches to several feet wide and tall, some scramble like vines or grow trunks like little trees. Their leaves might be narrow, heart- or palm-shape, densely fuzzy, or sleekly smooth; their flowers (some fringed exotically) come in a spectrum of whites, reds, yellow-greens, and almost-blacks. Most have odd, fleshy roots, which sustain the plants through dormant seasons. This dainty summer bloomer from South Africa's Cape Province grows 15 to 18 inches tall in the wild and erupts in fringed, unscented, wine-colored flowers. It dislikes extreme heat, preferring morning sun and shady afternoons. Keep it slightly moist during the growing season.

Robin Parer has been growing pelargoniums—along with geraniums and erodiums—for more than 35 years. Parer, a native Australian, fell for the entire Geraniaceae family in her youth, beginning with collectible, scented-leaf pelargoniums and moving on to grow and sell more than 900 varieties through her aptly named nursery, Geraniaceae, in Marin County, California. Parer traveled to South Africa to track down her favorites in their natural habitats, from the vinelike **P. gibbosum** along the country's rocky Western Cape to the long-living **P. schizopetalum**, which she found in the haunting Drakensberg mountains.

P. gibbosum - This is a coastal species and vinelike scrambler with long, semi-succulent leaves and stems that grow woody with age and flower yellow-green in winter. Parer describes its night-fragrant blooms as “strange and sweet, vanilla - and clove-scented with a feral note.”



P. gibbosum

Parer tells her clients that once you know a pelli's origins and habits—whether it naturally thrives on fog-bound bluffs or blooms in winter, for instance—they're not difficult to please. To that she adds a few key rules: Don't water pellies when they're dormant. Given their origins, pellies can't tolerate heavy soil or freezing temperatures, which, in most parts of the United States, means growing them in containers and whisking them indoors for the winter. In milder regions (USDA Zones 9 and 10), one can plant them in garden beds with very good drainage, making sure they have some shelter from the hottest summer sun.



P. Curviandrum

P. curviandrum - Not often grown because of its long summer dormancy, this species thrives in mountainous scrubland on South Africa's very dry Southern Cape. A rosette of hairy leaves sprouts from its underground tuber in spring, followed by tiny white-and-burgundy flowers.

The rewards of cultivating pellies, says Parer, far outweigh the demands. As the plants cycle through the year, they dramatize “the subtle intricacies of nature.” The greatest challenge might be laying hands on these collectors' gems, which, admittedly, is part of their charm. “You have to really look,” Parer says. “It's like a treasure hunt!”

P. triste - The first pelargonium introduced to England in the 17th century, this species has been cultivated for 400 years. Bonsai enthusiasts grow it high in the pot, exposing its knobbed tuber, which the plant doesn't mind. It has night-scented winter blossoms, and its leaf color and form varies.



P. carneum

P. carneum - This rare species produces large (1.5-inch), unscented autumn flowers after its leaves drop. Hard to propagate, it hails from rocky crevices and scrub in the limestone hills of South Africa's Southern Cape. In a pot, it grows a mere 5 inches wide and 8 to 10 inches tall from a turnip-shape tuber.