

BLOOM

Frank McDonough, Plant Information Specialist

The Gift from Argentina

Perhaps the most spectacular flowering tree display here in Los Angeles is put on by the Jacaranda tree. *Jacaranda mimosifolia* probably came with the 49'ers who brought the seeds from Buenos Aires, a common stopover for the clipper ships that were racing to the goldfields. In that South American city Jacarandas line the streets and parks and provide a fantastic display. Here in Southern California the Jacaranda's floral display can be even more intense than in its native habitat, owing to differing temperatures and weather conditions. Perhaps one of the most aesthetically pleasing aspects of the tree is the blue "shadow" of fallen flower corollas that litter the ground below the tree like a carpet of lavender. The Arboretum has introduced a white flowering variety of *Jacaranda* into the horticulture trade here, although the noticeable browning that can occur on the petals does make it less attractive than the lavender variety.



Jacaranda mimosifolia

Lily of the Nile

This hardy South African member of the Lily family, *Agapanthus x* (*Agapanthus crosses*) is a fixture of Southern Californian landscape architecture. It produces hardy clusters of light to dark blue blooms for several months in the summertime beginning around June. In its native South Africa it has been used as a heart medicine. *Agapanthus* has become hugely popular here due to its hardiness and reliable bloom. It is prone to burning, so locations in full sun next to walks or walls should be avoided. The Arboretum has introduced several new varieties of *Agapanthus* into the horticultural trade including the dark blue "Queen Anne."



Agapanthus x

Moreton Bay Chestnut

The Moreton bay chestnut, *Castanospermum australe*, is named that because its seeds were once used by native Australians as food. Although in their raw form, the seeds are poisonous, the aborigines were able to render them edible through a laborious process of washing and roasting. Native to the rainforests of Queensland, the gorgeous clusters of orange-red flowers of this tree would make it hugely popular if it wasn't for the fact that they are mostly hidden under its large, sprawling canopy. Messy nature makes it a poor choice for any, but the most remote and secluded areas of large estates. Many rue the day they planted this 'miracle.' But almost as if to apologize for its heavy litter and drooping, ugly branches, this tree puts on an April display of lavender trumpet shaped blooms that has no equal.



Castanospermum australe



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