

ONE OF THE MOST USEFUL AND BEAUTIFUL PLANTS OF THE TROPICS...

THE TI PLANT (PRONOUNCED LIKE 'TEA') KNOWN BOTANICALLY AS *CORDYLINE FRUTICOSA* (FORMERLY *C. TERMINALIS*) IN THE AGAVE FAMILY.

Ti is an evergreen shrub that grows three to ten feet high. The leaves are in tight spirals at the tops of the branches, and the stems are bare below. Each leaf is 1-2 feet long and 2-5 inches wide with a long grooved leaf stalk. There are many color forms besides the basic green type. The elongated starchy root can weigh up to 300 pounds. The original home of the Ti is not certain since this important plant has been carried throughout the Pacific and Southeast Asia by people since ancient times, and it has now been spread to tropical zones around the world. It is easy to grow from a stem stuck in the ground.

The Ti plant is often associated with Hawaii where it is planted widely as an ornamental and where one can find packaged stems to carry home as souvenirs. There Ti has been used to weave sandals and rain capes, for thatching homes and temples, for plates and cups and for wrapping food to be baked in pit ovens or broiled over coals.

Common people planted Ti outside the home or wore Ti leaves to ward off evil spirits. Today the art of making Ti leaf leis and leaf rosettes is still taught. The strangest use was for shark fishing; it was used to wrap the bait made of liver and 'awa (kava root) which sated and stupefied the sharks that were lassoed and pulled to shallow water where they died.

Baked roots are said to have the flavor of molasses candy. This product has been

used as a sweetener with other foods or mixed with water, fermented and distilled into an alcoholic drink. The young leaves have been cooked and eaten as a potherb.



Under the moniker "Good-luck plant" or "Lucky bamboo" the Ti plant has found its way into many modern American homes. The leafy green stems, often trained in a curious spiral form, miraculously survive for months or years in water.

At the L.A. County

Botanic Garden, most of our Ti plants can be found in the Tropical Greenhouse. As you will see there, in contrast to the normal green leaf, horticultural selections demonstrate a remarkable variation in

foliage. The leaves may be tinged or striped with red, purple, copper or hot pink. In Hawaii, an enormous collection of Ti plants can be found on the Hawaiian island of O'ahu at the Lyon Arboretum north of Honolulu in the misty Manoa Valley, just above Paradise Park. The curator, Ray Baker, shared two of his favorites with the author in 2001. 'Hauli Girl' and 'Kauai Beauty' are now established in the Tropical Bowl atop Tallac

Knoll.

So, to get lucky, grow a specimen of the Ti plant, either inside in a bright window or in a protected spot outdoors where you need a dramatic splash of ethnobotanical color.

Contributed by Jim Bauml, Senior Biologist

REMINDER: NOT TO BE MISSED!

CHRISTOPHER LLOYD AND FERGUS GARRETT LECTURE

THURSDAY, MAY 22, FROM 3:00-6:00 PM

Known for his amazing approach to garden design, color theory and the use of plants and architecture in the landscape, British gardening expert Christopher Lloyd has charmed horticultural fans around the globe with his books and appearances on BBC-Television. Joining Christopher Lloyd will be Fergus Garrett, head gardener at Great Dixter and a well-known lecturer and author.

Tickets are \$25 for members and \$35 for non-members, and can be purchased by calling 626-821-4624 or 821-4623. Seating is limited.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

PLANTS

May 3 & 4:

Baldwin Bonanza Plant Sale

9:00 am - 4:30 pm

May 18:

45th Annual

Epiphyllum Show & Sale

9 am to 4 pm

May 24 & 25:

Santa Anita Bonsai Show

9:30 am to 5 pm

June 7:

Daylily Show & Plant Sale

9 am to 4 pm

June 14 & 15:

Chong Hoa Bonsai & Rare Stones Show

10 am to 4 pm

PLACES

May 11:

The Queen Anne Cottage Open House

10 am -4 pm

July 27:

Checker Car Club Show

10 am to 3 pm

PEOPLE

May 22:

Christopher Lloyd Lecture Author & Garden Designer

3 pm to 6 pm

June 16 - August 29:

Kid's Science Adventures Day Camp

8 am to 3 pm

FOOD

"FRESH - Celebrating the Table!"

May 15:

Summer Fruit Pastries with Joan Collins

3 pm to 5 pm

May 29:

A Spring Celebration with Jimmy Martinez

3 pm to 5 pm

June 26 and July 31:

Kids' Cooking Classes

3 pm to 5 pm



2003. "Christopher Lloyd and Fergus Garrett lecture: Thursday, May 22, from 3:00-6:00 pm." *News from the LA County Botanic Garden* 2003:May-July, 5.

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