



## A SELECTION OF PLANTS IN *THE BEGONIA HOUSE*<sup>1</sup>

<p><b>Brazilian heart begonia</b> <i>Begonia solananthera</i></p> <p><b>Begonia</b> 17th century French patron of botany, Michel Begon. <b>solananthera</b> Anthers like those in <i>Solanum</i> [of nightshade (i.e. potato) family]?</p>	<p>Begoniaceae [Begonias]</p>	<p><b>Tropics and subtropics of the Old World and New World.</b> Dicot. A trailing and/or scandent [climbing] species, doing either depending on environment. Evergreen, growing to 15cm high. Originally described by Alphonse DeCandolle in 1859.</p>
		
<p><b>Calico flower, Elegant Dutchman's pipe</b> <i>Aristolochia littoralis</i></p> <p><b>Aristolochia</b> Ancient Greek <i>aristos</i> "best" + <i>locheia</i> childbirth or childbed, as in ancient times the plant was thought to be effective against infections caused by childbirth. <b>littoralis</b> Latin <i>littoralis</i> coast.</p>	<p>Aristolochiaceae [Birthworts]</p> <div data-bbox="598 1570 914 1709"> <p>This plant contains aristolochic acid, a toxic alkaloid.</p> </div>	<p><b>Southern and Western South America.</b> Dicot. Woody vine climbing to 3-4.5m. Prefers soils of average moisture, and grows well in part-sun to shade up to altitude 1,150m. Pollinated by flies which are attracted by the unpleasant [to humans] carrion-like odour produced by the flowers. The numerous winged seeds are borne in dry dehiscent capsules that split like small parachutes. Seeds are winged therefore dispersed easily by wind.</p>

<sup>1</sup> From *Begonia House*'s 'Apprentice Plant List': A mish-mash of some vaguely interesting points compiled by Reg Harris.



**Bird of Paradise, Crane flower**  
*Strelitzia reginae*

**Strelitzia** Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.  
**reginae** Latin 'of the queen'; commemorates the British queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, wife of George III.

Strelitziaceae  
[No particular family common name?]

[The three genera with seven species of Strelitziaceae have been included in Musaceae (thus bananas) in some classifications, but are generally recognized as a separate family in more recent classifications.]

**South Africa.** Monocot. Grow from rhizomes to almost 2m high. The flowers stand above the foliage at the tips of long stalks. The hard beak-like sheath from which the flower emerges is the *spathe*. This is perpendicular to the stem, which makes it look like a bird's head and beak. It makes a durable perch for holding the sunbirds which pollinate the flowers. The flowers, which emerge one at a time from the spathe, consist of three brilliant orange sepals and three purplish-blue or white petals. Two of the blue or white petals are joined together to form an arrow-like nectary. When the sunbirds sit to drink the nectar, petals open to cover their feet in pollen.



<p><b>Common name?</b> <i>Stromanthe thalia</i></p> <p><b>Stromanthe</b> Greek <i>stroma</i> layer, bed + <i>άνθος</i> [??] flower, with reference to the bracts that contain the flowers. <b>thalia</b> German physician Johannes Thal [1542-1583].</p>	<p>Marantaceae [Arrowroots]</p>	<p><b>Brazil.</b> Monocot. Atlantic pluvial forest, often at the margins of the clearings, from the sea level up to about 1700 m altitude. Perennial rhizomatous herbaceous species, evergreen, 0.5-1.5 m tall.</p>
--	-------------------------------------	---



<p><b>Lady palm, Bamboo palm</b> <i>Rhapis excelsa</i></p> <p><b>Rhapis</b> Greek needle. <b>excelsa</b> Latin tall.</p>	<p>Arecaceae [Palms]</p>	<p><b>Southern China, Taiwan.</b> Monocot. Up to 4m high and 30mm diameter in multi-stemmed clumps with glossy evergreen leaves. New foliage emerges from a fibrous sheath which stays attached to the base. As the plants age, the sheaths fall, revealing the bamboo-like trunks. Small inflorescence, ripe fruit fleshy and white. Propagates readily by rhizomes. Low light requirements, so good for malls, etc.</p>
--	------------------------------	---



<p><b>Macawflower, Red palulu</b></p>	<p>Heliconiaceae</p>	<p><b>South America, West Indies.</b></p>
---------------------------------------	----------------------	---



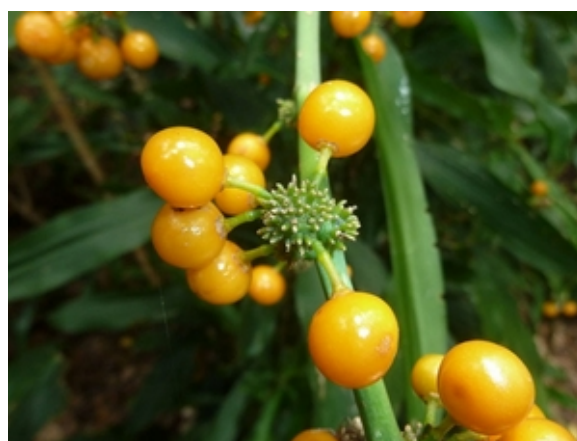
<p><i>Heliconia bihai</i></p> <p><b>Heliconia</b> Greek <i>Helikōn</i>, <i>Helicon</i>, the mountain in Greece where the Muses were said to dwell [a pun on <i>Musa</i> (banana), to which it is loosely related and resembles.  <b>bihai</b> ???</p>	<p>[Heliconias]</p>	<p>Monocot. An erect herb typically growing taller than 1.5m. The upward facing flower of the Macawflower and its family, which acts as a cup, is a natural source of rain water for birds and insects. Flowers are typically pollinated by bats and hummingbirds. Bluish fruits.</p>
---	---------------------	---



<p><b>Ardisia</b>  <i>Ardisia crispa</i></p> <p><b>Ardisia</b> Latin pointed [i.e. linear-lanceolate] stamens.  <b>crispa</b> Latin with curled or wavy margins [relating to leaf].</p>	<p>Primulaceae  [Coralberries, Marlberries, <i>et al</i>]  Subfamily Myrsinoides, as resembles a myrsine.</p>	<p><b>Southern China, Japan, India.</b> Dicot. Evergreen growing to 2m high. Prefers acid, neutral and basic [alkaline] wet soils. It can grow in semi-shade [light woodland].</p>
---	---	--



<p><b>Cornstalk dracaena, Corn plant, Happy plant</b>  <i>Dracaena fragrans</i></p> <p><b>Dracaena</b> Greek <i>Drakaina</i> Dragon.  <b>fragrans</b> Latin fragrant.</p>	<p>Draceanaceae  [Dragon trees]</p>	<p><b>Tropical Africa.</b> Monocot. A slow growing shrub, usually multi-stemmed at the base, mature specimens reaching 15m or more tall. Stems on old plants may reach up to 30cm diameter. Flowers in panicles. Fruit is an orangey-yellow berry up to 2cm diameter, containing several seeds.</p>
---	---	---


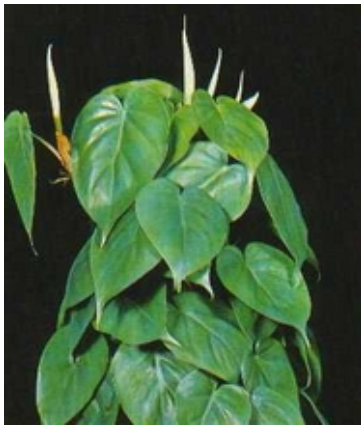
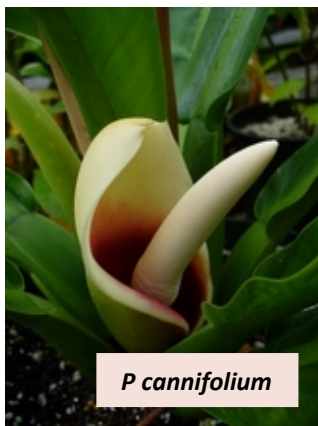








<p><b>Earth star</b> [any one of many in this genus]  <i>Cryptanthus</i> 'Glad'</p> <p><b>Cryptanthus</b> Latin <i>Crypt</i> Hidden + Greek <i>Anthos</i> Flower.  <b>Glad</b> [a hybrid, from a pollen parent named 'Glad'].</p>	<p>Bromeliaceae  [Bromeliads]</p>	<p><b>Brazil.</b> Monocot. Unlike many bromeliads, this one grows in the soil.</p>
---	---------------------------------------	--



??? Can't find a pic of a C. Glad. Can someone supply one for the Begonia House specimen, please?



<p><b>Sweetheart plant, Heart leaf philodendron</b> <i>Philodendron scandens</i></p> <p><b>Philodendron</b> Greek <i>philo</i>-love, affection + <i>dendron</i> tree. <b>scandens</b> Latin <i>scandere</i> climbing.</p>	<p>Araceae [Arums]</p> <p>This plant is toxic to cats and dogs.</p>	<p><b>Mexico, Brazil, West Indies.</b> Monocot. Known as a vine and climber due to its ability to grow to huge heights given the right conditions. These plants are naturally found in humid tropical rainforests but they are also found in swamps and river banks. Produces spathes of white flowers on mature plants.</p>
		
<p><b>Madagascar Dragon tree</b> <i>Dracaena marginata</i></p> <p><b>Dracaena</b> Greek <i>Drakaina</i> Dragon. <b>marginata</b> Latin margined.</p>	<p>Draceanaceae [Dragon trees]</p> <p>The leaves of this plant are extremely toxic to cats and dogs.</p>	<p><b>Madagascar, Mauritius.</b> Grows up to 4m tall. One of the plants used in a <i>NASA Clean Air Study</i> and has shown to help remove formaldehyde. It is an effective air cleaner and <i>said</i> to be one of the best plants for removing xylene and trichloroethylene.</p>
		

<p><b>Flamingo flower</b> <i>Anthurium andreanum</i></p> <p><b>Anthurium</b> Greek <i>Anthos</i> Flower. <b>andreanum</b> Greek <i>oura</i> tail, referring to the spadix.</p>	<p>Araceae [Arums]</p> <p><i>Anthurium</i> plants are poisonous due to calcium oxalate crystals. The sap is irritating to the skin and eyes</p>	<p><b>Columbia, Ecuador.</b> Monocot. An epiphytic, sometimes climbing, perennial, preferring warm, shady and humid climates, such as tropical rainforests. A characteristic feature is its brightly coloured spathe leaf, and the protruding inflorescence called the spadix.</p>
		
<p><b>Dumb cane</b> <i>Dieffenbachia amoena</i></p> <p><b>Dieffenbachia</b> Name given by Heinrich Wilhelm Schott, director of the Vienna Botanical Gardens, to honour his head gardener Joseph Dieffenbach [1796–1863]. <b>Amoena</b> Latin beautiful.</p>	<p>Araceae [Arums]</p> <p>As for all <i>Dieffenbachia</i> species, the sap is poisonous.</p>	<p><b>Mexico, West Indies.</b> Monocot. Grows to 2m maximum. Gets its name from the temporary speechlessness that occurs after chewing a piece of the stem. Juices contain oxalates <i>etc</i> that irritate the mucous membranes and cause swelling and inflammation of the tongue and throat. Dumb cane is reported to have been given to slaves as a form of punishment.</p>
		

<p><b>Monkey plant, Trailing velvet plant</b>  <i>Ruellia makoyana</i></p> <p><b>Ruellia</b> French botanist and physician Jean Ruel [1474-1537], herbalist to François I of France, and author of <i>De Natura Plantarum</i>.  <b>makoyana</b> Jacob Makoy Lambert, 19th century sponsor of plant collecting trips to Brazil.</p>	<p>Acanthaceae  [Acanthuses]</p>	<p><b>Brazil.</b> Dicot. Evergreen perennial growing to 60cm. Aphids like it a lot.</p>
<div data-bbox="248 792 705 1160" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="727 792 1310 1160" data-label="Image"> </div>		
<p><b>Coleus</b>  <i>Plectranthus scutellarioides</i></p> <p><b>Plectranthus</b> Greek <i>plektron</i> spur + <i>anthos</i> flower, referring to the spurred flowers.  <b>scutellarioides</b> Latin <i>scutella</i> small dish or bowl + <i>oides</i> like this.</p>	<p>Lamiaceae [Verbenaceae?]  [Mints, Deadnettles]</p>	<p><b>South East Asia, Australia.</b> Dicot. Upright annual or short-lived perennial plant growing to 1m tall. Highly variable leaf colour and shape. In cross section a branch is four-sided [the same as in Puriri (<i>Vitex lucens</i>), also in this family].</p> <p>The stamens are joined for about half their length [again, note Puriri] and are covered by the upper lip of the flower. The black 1mm long fruit is described as a 'nutlet'.</p>





**Fiddle leaf fig**

*Ficus lyrata*

**Ficus** Latin fig.

**lyrata** Latin like a lyre  
[pertaining to leaf shape].

Moraceae

[Mulberries, Figs]

**Western Africa.** Dicot. Lowland tropical rainforest. Commonly starts life as an epiphyte high in the crown of another tree; it then sends roots to the ground where they envelop the trunk of the host tree and slowly strangle it. It can also grow as a free-standing tree on its own, growing to 12–15m tall.



**Black bat flower**

*Tacca chantrieri*

**Tacca** New Latin Tacca, and Malaysian name for the plant, *taka*.

**chantrieri** Chantrier Frères, nurserymen of Mortefontaine, France.

Taccaceae

[Batflowers, Arrowroots]

**South America, Africa, Southern China, South East Asia, Australia.** Monocot. Understorey of rainforest. Rhizomatous evergreen. When conditions are good it will grow [up to 90cm tall], sprout suckers and bloom from late spring till autumn. Flowers, black, are somewhat bat-shaped, are up to 30cm across, and have long 'whiskers' that can grow up to 70cm.



**Swiss cheese plant, Fruit salad plant**

*Monstera deliciosa*


**Monstera** Latin monster, referring to height reached.  
**deliciosa** Latin delicious, referring to the delicious fruit.

Araceae  
 [Arums]

**Southern Mexico to Panama.** Can grow to over 9m. Humid tropical forests, in the lowlands and middle mountains. The seeds fall to the ground, then the seedlings crawl [negative phototropism] until they meet a tree on which to attach. The many adjacent roots thus allow the plant to anchor against its new support and reach the forest canopy.





<p><b>Mother-in-law's tongue, Viper's bowstring hemp</b>  <i>Sansevieria trifasciata</i></p> <p><b>Sansevieria</b> Count Pietro Antonio Sanseverino, an Italian patron of Horticulture in Naples.  <b>trifasciata</b> Latin three bundles.</p>	<p>Asparagaceae  [Asparaguses etc]</p> <div data-bbox="571 613 935 925"> <p>The plant contains saponins which are mildly toxic to small children, dogs and cats and can lead to gastrointestinal upset if consumed.</p> </div>	<p><b>Tropical West Africa.</b> Monocot. an evergreen perennial plant forming dense stands, spreading by way of its creeping rhizome, which is sometimes above ground, sometimes underground. Can reach 2m in height. This plant has CAM photosynthesis, meaning the stomata [used to exchange gases], are opened only at night to prevent water from escaping <i>via</i> evaporation in the hot sun. As a result, stored oxygen is released at the opening of the stomata at night, unlike most plants which continuously exchange gases during the day. A source for fibers used to make bowstrings.</p>
		
<p><b>Hen and chicken fern</b>  <i>Asplenium bulbiferum</i></p> <p><b>Asplenium</b> Greek <i>a</i> without + <i>splene</i> spleen [A northern hemisphere species, the black spleenwort <i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>, was once believed to be a cure for diseases of the spleen.]  <b>bulbiferum</b> Greek bearing bulbills or bulbs.</p>	<p>Aspleniaceae  [Spleenworts]</p>	<p><b>New Zealand.</b> Commonly grows in most bush areas. Grow small bulbills on top of their fronds. Once grown to about 5cm, these offspring fall off and, if the soil they land in is kept moist, develop a root system and grow into new ferns. This additional means of reproduction can be employed with greater ease than propagation by spores. Fronds are edible.</p>





**Common name?**

*Philodendron speciosum*

**Philodendron** Greek *philo* love, affection + *dendron* tree.  
**speciosum** Latin Showy, spectacular.

Araceae  
[Arums]

**Brazil, Bolivia.** Monocot. The mature plant produces large hastate leaves up to almost 2m long. As the plant matures it produces a large trunk. The flowers are around 60cm tall and have a strong fruit smell at night.



**Highland breadfruit**

*Ficus dammaropsis*

**Ficus** Latin Fig.

**Dammaropsis** Combination of the name of the genus *Dammara* and of the Greek *opsis* = look, from the resemblance of the young fruits with those of *Dammara alba*.

Moraceae  
[Mulberries, Figs]

**New Guinea.** Dicot. Tropical forest, generally growing at altitudes of between 800m and 2,700m. Fruit is a synconium<sup>2</sup>. Boiled young fruits are eaten as a vegetable with pig meat; leaves are used to wrap food, including that above, are edible.

<sup>2</sup>An **inflorescence** formed by an enlarged, fleshy, hollow **receptacle** with multiple **ovaries** on the inside surface. In essence, it is really a fleshy stem with a number of flowers, so it is considered both a **multiple** and **accessory** fruit.



**Weeping fig**  
*Ficus benjamina*

**Ficus** Latin fig.  
**benjamina** From Benjan, the Indian name for this plant.

Moraceae  
[Mulberries, Figs]

**South East Asia, Australia.** Dicot. A tree reaching 30m tall in natural conditions. In suburbia the roots grow rapidly, invading gardens, growing under and lifting sidewalks, patios, and driveways.



**Cabbage palm, Palm lily, Ti plant**  
*Cordyline fruticosa*

**Cordyline** Greek *kordyle*, club, a reference to the enlarged underground stems or rhizomes.  
**fruticosa** Latin *frutex*, a shrub, therefore, shrubby, bushy.

Asparagaceae  
[Agaves, Asparaguses, Hyacinths, *et al*]

Formerly listed in the Agavaceae and Laxmanniaceae [now both subfamilies of Asparagaceae]

**South & South East Asia, New Guinea, Northern Australia.** Monocot. Woody palm-like plant growing to 3m-4m tall. Religious uses, also widely used for traditional medicine, dye, and ornamentation throughout Austronesia and New Guinea.





**Rubber fig**  
*Ficus elastica*

**Ficus** Latin fig.  
**elastica** Latin elastic.

Moraceae  
[Mulberries, Figs]

The latex produced by  
*Ficus elastica* is an  
irritant to the eyes and  
skin and is toxic if taken  
internally.

**South Asia, South East asia.** Grows to up to 40 m tall, with a trunk up to 2m diameter. The trunk develops aerial and buttressing roots to anchor it in the soil and help support heavy branches. As with others in the genus, the flowers require a particular species of fig wasp to pollinate them in a co-evolved relationship. So the rubber plant does not produce highly colourful or fragrant flowers to attract other pollinators. The fruit is a small yellow-green oval fig 1 cm long, barely edible; these are fake fruits that contain fertile seeds only in areas where the pollinating insect is present.



**Wandering Jew**  
*Tradescantia zebrina*


Commelinaceae  
[Spiderworts]

**Mexico, Central America, Colombo.**  
Monocot. Low-lying, slightly

Skin irritation may  
result from repeated  
contact with or  
prolonged handling of



<p><b>Tradescantia</b> British naturalist and botanist John Tradescant [1608-1662], traveller, plant collector in Virginia.</p> <p><b>zebrina</b> Zebra, as in striped leaves.</p>		<p>succulent, perennial, herbaceous plant that often forms dense mats or colonies. This is done primarily by natural formation of sinkers. Grows in thickets in wetland and rainforest, often on stones in shady and open areas or on river banks at altitudes up to 2000m, but mainly at lower altitudes.</p>
<div data-bbox="285 683 758 1034" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="762 683 1287 1034" data-label="Image"> </div>		
<p><b>King of the bromeliads</b> <i>Vriesia hieroglyphica</i></p> <p><b>Vriesia</b> Willem Hendrik de Vriese, Dutch botanist, physician [1806–1862].</p> <p><b>hieroglyphica</b> Latin Hieroglyphs, referring to linear horizontal pattern on leaves.</p>	<p>Bromeliaceae [Bromeliads]</p>	<p><b>Brazil.</b> Monocot. Grows at low altitudes in humid conditions under the shade of trees in the Atlantic coast. Develops green leaves with irregular dark cross banding and recurved tips. The plant develops 30-40 shiny, bright green leaves measuring up to almost 1m long.</p>
<div data-bbox="215 1480 1342 1942" data-label="Image"> </div>		
<p><b>Misteltoe fig</b></p>	<p>Moraceae</p>	<p><b>Southeast Asia.</b> Dicot. Perennial</p>

<p><i>Ficus deltoidea</i></p> <p><b>Ficus</b> Latin fig.  <b>deltoidea</b> Latin delta-like, referring to leaf shape.</p>	<p>[Mulberries, Figs]</p>	<p>herb growing at up to 3,200m. About 2m tall, with thick leaves that are deltoid in shape, rounded at the apex and tapering at the base. Leaves of female plants are big and round, while the leaves of male plants are small, round and long. The plant can be terrestrial, lithophytic or epiphytic.</p>
		
<p><b>Red hot cats tail, Bastard copperleaf</b>  <i>Acalypha chamaedrifolia</i></p> <p><b>Acalypha</b> Greek nettle, inspired by the nettle-like leaves.  <b>chamaedrifolia</b> Latin Having leaves like chamaedrys [an old name for Germander, Dwarf Oak].</p>	<p>Euphorbiaceae  [Spurges]</p> <p>Ingestion of this plant may cause minor illnesses such as vomiting or diarrhea.</p>	<p><b>Florida/Caribbean.</b> Dicot. Woody-based perennial herb 15-30cm high growing [at least in Jamaica] in grasslands and thickets to 300m altitude. Flowers are catkin-like, producing loculicidal fruit capsules.</p>
		
<p><b>Persian shield, Royal purple</b></p>	<p>Acanthaceae</p>	<p><b>Burma.</b> Dicot. E</p>



<p><b>plant</b> <i>Strobilanthes dyerianus</i></p> <p><b>Strobilanthes</b> Greek <i>strobilos</i> cone + <i>anthos</i> a flower for the form of the flower-head. <b>dyerianus</b> botanist Sir William Turner Thiselton-Dyer [1843-1928], Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1885-1905.</p>	<p>[Acanthuses]</p>	<p>Tropical soft-stemmed evergreen shrub growing to 1m high.</p>
<div data-bbox="248 736 821 1164" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="855 736 1303 1164" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="1147 853 1422 965" data-label="Caption"> <p>Flower of <i>S dyerianus</i> ????</p> </div>		
<p><b>Common name?</b> <i>Begonia fuchsioides</i></p> <p><b>Begonia</b> 17th century French patron of botany, Michel Begon. <b>fuchsioides</b> Fuchsia-like, referring to both leaves and flowers.</p>	<p>Begoniaceae [Begonias]</p>	<p><b>Mexico.</b> Dicot. Bushy, branching perennial up to 60cm tall.</p>
<div data-bbox="181 1556 879 1919" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="900 1556 1386 1919" data-label="Image"> </div>		
<p><b>Ponytail palm</b> <i>Beaucarnea recurvata</i></p>	<p>Asparagaceae [Agaves, Asparaguses,</p>	<p><b>Mexico.</b> Monocot. Evergreen perennial growing to 4.7m with a</p>



<p><b>Beaucarnea</b> Symbolises strength and imperturbability. Combination of <i>Beau</i> [beautiful] and <i>carneia</i>, a mythical Greek harvest festival.</p> <p><b>recurvata</b> Latin bent backwards, referring to the leaves.</p>	<p>Hyacinths, <i>et al</i>]</p>	<p>noticeable expanded <i>caudex</i> [an enlargement of the stem, branch or root of a woody plant], for storing water. <i>Not</i> a palm [Arecaceae], despite the common name. Specimens in Mexico up to 350 years old.</p>
		
<p><b>Common name?</b> <i>Plectranthus thyrsoideus</i></p> <p><b>Plectranthus</b> Greek <i>plektron</i> spur + <i>anthos</i> flower, referring to the spurred flowers.</p> <p><b>thyrsoideus</b> Staff-like [in Greek mythology, <i>Thursos</i> was a rod or wand tipped with a pine]. cone] ...resembling the flower head of this plant...?</p>	<p>Lamiaceae [Mints, Deadnettles]</p>	<p><b>Tropical East and Central Africa.</b> Montane areas, often sheltered under rocks. Shrubby perennial herb, up to 1m tall.</p>
		
<p><b>Aluminium plant</b> <i>Pilea cadieri</i></p>	<p>Urticaceae [Nettles]</p>	<p><b>China, Vietnam.</b> Dicot. Green perennial to 30cm tall.</p>

**Pilea** Latin cap, as to shape of flower.

**cadierei** 20th-century botanist  
R.P. Cadière.

