

Reproduced by kind permission of Evensford Productions Limited and
Pollinger Limited. Copyright c Evensford Productions Limited, 1972.

Quite the most fascinating thing about gardening, to my mind, is that it is an endless voyage of discovery. You often come upon a plant of which, though it may have been in cultivation for a couple of centuries, you have never heard before. Recently I was glancing through that famous book Thornton's *Temple of Flora*, first published in 1807, then issued as the first fine-printed George Rainbird book in 1951 and now reissued in equally handsome style by Collins at £4.25. This book, as Mr Geoffrey Grigson points out in his preface to it, is really not of any great appeal to the 'botanical scientist or even to the scientific or painstaking gardener'; it is simply 'an extraordinary theatre of romanticism'.

Theatre is right; the plants and flowers depicted in it are like theatrical characters, some gaudy, some lovable, some enchanting, some mysterious, some villainous, some sinister, some poisonous, some with a strange quality of surrealism. Next to a plate of picotee carnations and old fashioned 'broken' tulips (which, happily, you can still buy), you find a creature called the maggot-bearing stapelia, which looks rather like a dark, sinister octopus that has somehow got a football rosette stuck on to it—quite one of the oddest characters you ever saw.

And what on earth is a China Limodoron? A native of South East Asia, it looks like some exotic architectural hyacinth and rather like a sister of another oddity, this time from North East India and Burma, called the Nodding Renealmia. Side by side with these two not unbeautiful curiosities is a common villain, the dirtiest scoundrel ever, at once to be hissed off the stage—the Dragon Arum (*Dracunculus vulgaris*) with its noxious purple spathe and its even more noxious stink. This horror, which should never, never be planted in a garden would seem to be rivalled, if that is possible, by an American bog plant aptly named the Skunk Cabbage.

But not all, thank goodness, is romantic horror. Three enchanting passion flowers are depicted, the Blue Passion Flower, well known of course and in cultivation since the seventeenth century, the Winged Passion Flower and the Quadrilateral Passion

Some odds and gems

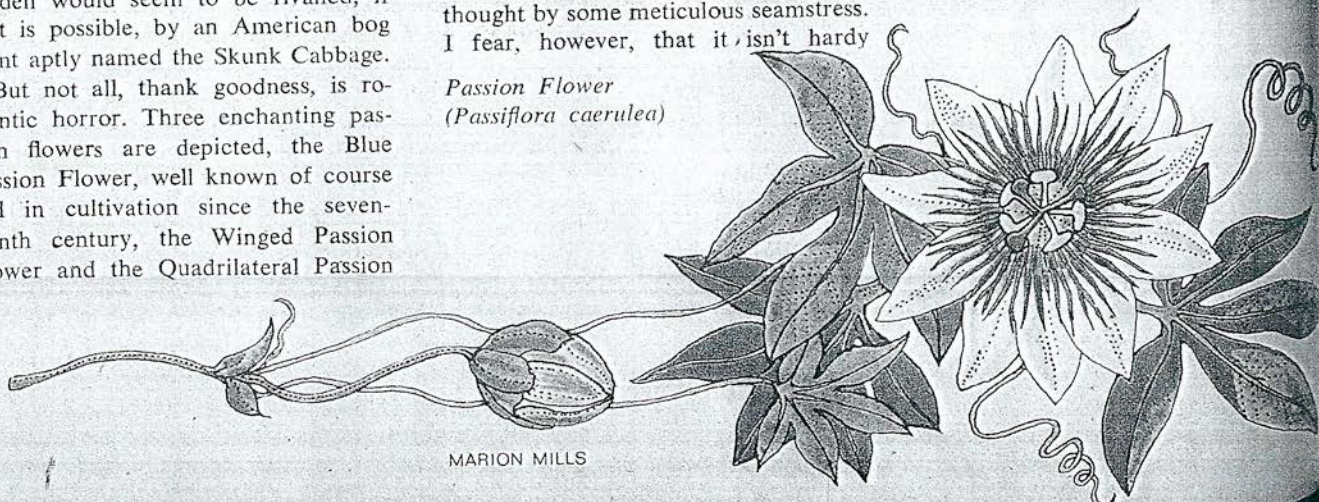


by H. E. Bates

Flower. Of these last two I have had no experience; nor, until recently, had I any idea that there were also a pink passion flower and a wine-red one, two charming climbers of which you can get seed. *Passiflora quadrangularis* is otherwise known as the Granadilla, having pink flowers and blue, red and purple fruits which are edible.

Another recent discovery of mine and quite one of the most ethereal things I have seen is petrea (this may be *P. arborea*, *P. racemosa* or *P. volubilis*) sometimes known as Purple Wreath. This is also a climber and can best be described, I think, as an infinitely refined wisteria, not the least lovely feature about it being a darker central petal, looking like a piece of purple velvet sewn on as an afterthought by some meticulous seamstress. I fear, however, that it isn't hardy

Passion Flower
(*Passiflora caerulea*)



MARION MILLS

here, though I fancy the cool house would afford it protection enough.

Just as lovely is *Allamanda cathartica*, with its shiny rich green leaves and butter-golden trumpets that look as if they were moulded from wax. This needs considerable warmth, so that putting it into a cool house will only court failure.

The same is true of stephanotis, whose exquisite pure white trumpets, rich with heavenly perfume, grace endless brides' bouquets year in, year out. But if you can't grow this you can always try *Jasminum polyanthum*, its narrower white trumpets, at first rich pink in the bud, being just as exquisitely scented. This, so nearly hardy, presents no trouble, strikes easily from cuttings and can be trained into conical pyramids which are quite excellent in the house.

An equally beautiful climber is *Hoya carnosa*, with thick leathery leaves and pendant clusters of waxy pink flowers, also richly scented, each of which carries, every morning, a globule of honey-tasting nectar at the tip. And speaking of tips, here is a tip about the hoye. Never over-pot it. My own plant, now ten years old, still lives happily and profitably in its original 6in pot and obliges by flowering twice or even three times a year, whereas cuttings given away and constantly re-potted have never flowered at all.

Lastly, a plant entirely new to me but one of much enchantment: *Ibora riparia*, formerly *Moschosma riparia*. This graceful plant with its delicate sprays of lilac-pink flowers comes, I think, from Rhodesia. Its winter requirements under glass are not, apparently, exacting; it also strikes easily from cuttings and I am therefore hoping to use it rather as I use two excellent salvias, *S. fulgens* and *S. involucrata*, planting it out in summer and then securing cuttings before winter sets in.

© Evensford Productions Ltd, 1972