Plant of the Month



November 2024

Common Name: White Jacaranda
Scientific Name: *Jacaranda mimosifolia* 'Alba' D.Don
Family: Bignoniaceae
Etymology
Genus: *Jacaranda* – latin form of indigenous Brazilian word
Species: *mimosifolia* - latin for leaf resembling mimosa



Distribution
Species is native to southern Bolivia and north-western Argentina and naturalised in parts of South Africa.

Native Habitat
Species from seasonally dry forests.

Description
Deciduous tree growing to 12-15 metres tall and wide, with a single main trunk and complex network of twiggy branches. Leaves are bipinnate, bright green and feather or fernlike. Leaves turn deep golden in August-September before falling.

Flowers
Species has tubular, hyacinth blue flowers produced in large panicles at the end of branches (terminal). Flowers of the white form differ only in colour. Flowers carry a faint scent and are pollinated by bees.

Fruit
Fruit is a flat, disc-shaped woody follicle 5-6 cm across, green at first but brown and very hard when mature. Seeds are flat, rectangular to 5mm across with a fine membrane wing. The white form does not come true to type from seed and is propagated vegetatively and usually grafted.

Location in Garden
White form on lawn 34 near the Mare and Foal statue. Purple forms can be found throughout the garden including our oldest plant in bed 112.
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Information
Forty nine species of Jacaranda occur in South America but this species, first described scientifically in 1822 has become one of the worlds most popular ornamental trees.

The purple flowering form has been extensively planted in Australia since it was first introduced to Sydney by nursery man Thomas Shephard at his Chippendale nursery in the early 1850s. However, it was not until 1868, when Michael Guilfoyle solved the problem of how to propagate trees from cuttings that trees sold from his Guilfoyle's Exotic Nursery in Double Bay started to become common in Sydney's gardens.

Jacaranda mimosifolia is first listed in this botanic garden in 1857 and its flowering was recorded in the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper in 1868.

Jacaranda mimosifolia 'Alba' was first developed in Florida. It was imported into Australia by doctor and plant collector, George Hewitt in 1960 and planted in the grounds of Bellingen hosptial, where it still grows today. Our tree was planted in 1991.

The white flowers of this tree make an interesting contrast to the famous 'purple haze' created by the more commonly planted species form of this Jacaranda. If you love Jacarandas, you can find another species, *Jacaranda cuspidifolia* (Caroba) growing in our Palace Garden precinct (bed 69) near the Conservatorium of Music Gate.

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BOTANIC GARDENS OF SYDNEY