

## PASSION FLOWERS - A TALK BY JANE LINDSAY

*John Sirkett*

**T**ynning's Climbers is situated on a parcel of Grade 1 agricultural land near Bristol. The nursery was started by Jane Lindsay's grandfather in 1963. He worked the site entirely by hand, growing fruit, vegetables and cut flowers. Jane was born on the site, and at the age of 17 she went to work at a nearby nursery with John Vanderplank. Roy Cheek at Cannington College, near Bridgwater, had suggested that John might consider forming a National Collection of Passiflora; at the time, he thought that there might be about 10 to collect. In fact, there are about 600 species and 800 cultivars.



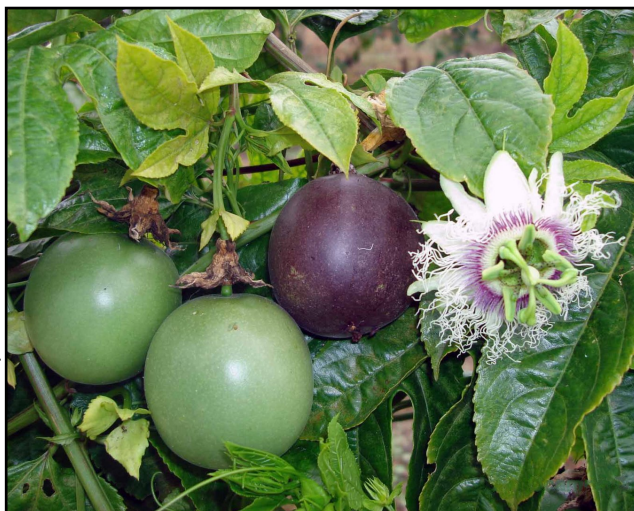
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*Passiflora caerulea*

In 2003, Jane took over her grandfather's nursery and started to grow climbers. She now runs the nursery with Toni O'Connor, specialising in both hardy and more tender climbers from the temperate and warmer regions of the world. The land around the site is slowly being bought up for development, and Jane was able to buy two secondhand greenhouses from the developers.

This year [2018] the greenhouses have been essential, although the weather had been balmy until the end of February. The entire stock of 900 plants requires tidying throughout spring, with dead growth pruned off ready for the new season. The weather is always a worry between mid-December and mid-March. If there is snow, it has to be brushed from the greenhouse roofs before it freezes, to protect the structure from damage.

*Passiflora caerulea* is a vigorous hardy climber which is good on a house wall, where it is protected from cold winds and kept dry at the roots. In the wild it grows in stony soils, so it will stand a lot of neglect. The orange fruits are freely produced at the end of summer and are edible but they do not have the best flavour. There are about 100 species that produce good edible fruit, of which about 100,000 tonnes are produced annually worldwide.



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*P. edulis*



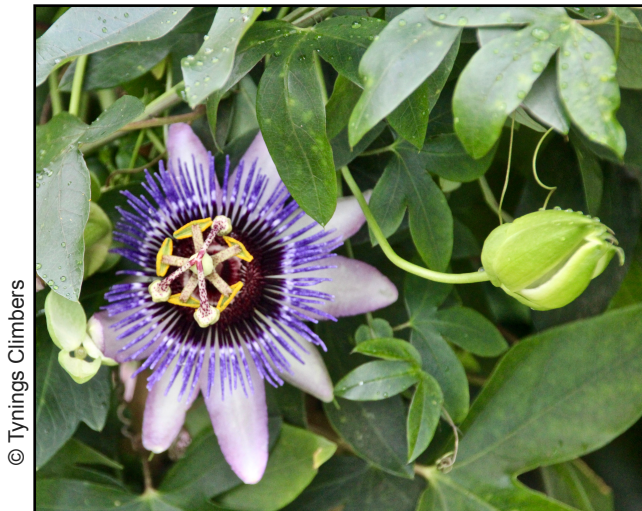
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*P. 'Snow Queen'*

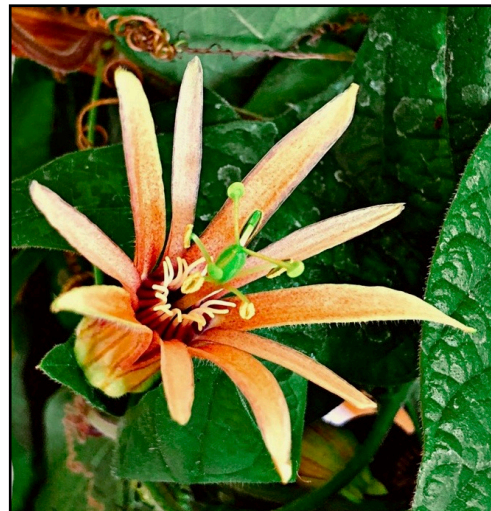
*P. edulis* produces the familiar passion fruit seen on our supermarket shelves. It can be grown outside in the UK and it is self-fertile, but the fruits are late to ripen in our climate.

*P. 'Snow Queen'* is a new, vigorous, hardy hybrid with pure white flowers, a great improvement on the older white form, 'Constance Elliott'. It is sterile and doesn't set fruit. 'Amethyst' and 'Victoria' also perform well outside or under cold glass. They are both lilac-purple.

*P. 'Silly Cow'* is a recent introduction with strong blue filaments and a vigorous habit, flowering profusely in semi-shade from July to October. It can be seen growing well on the wall of the laboratory at Wisley. When it was introduced to the United States, the name was deemed unsuitable and it was changed to 'Duuk'.



*P. 'Silly Cow'*



*P. aurantia*

There are no hardy red-flowered cultivars, despite occasional claims to the contrary, but there are many tender passion flowers. *P. 'Scarlet Flame'* is one of the best red-flowered cultivars, but it must be grown in a heated greenhouse. *P. aurantia* is one of the few species to come from Australia and is too tender to grow outside, but it makes a good houseplant, growing to 1-2m high. Unlike other species, the flowers can remain open for as long as a week.

*P. alata* is a good climber for a conservatory; it is fairly small-growing and the scented flowers are freely produced in a pot. Sometimes called the sea anemone passion flower because of its remarkable blooms, it may be possible to grow it outside in south west England and, although it only flowers from March to May, it produces sweet and tasty fruits.



*P. alata* can withstand temperatures down to 5°C



The fruit of *P. foetida* is poisonous unless fully ripe

*P. foetida*, the stinking passion flower, produces flowers early in the morning which close by 11am. The developing fruit is surrounded by sticky, prickly bracts that can trap insects which exude a sticky substance containing digestive enzymes. This minimises predation on young flowers and fruits and protects them as they grow. Whether or not the plant gains nourishment from its prey is uncertain, and it is currently considered a protocarnivorous plant. It originates in dry places in North, Central and South America.

Passion flowers are an important food source for heliconia butterflies, and their caterpillars can devastate the vines very rapidly. Tender *P. 'Sunburst'* has strongly aromatic flowers, and has developed its own deterrent to this predator. Its leaves are spotted to create the appearance that they are already covered in butterfly eggs, discouraging visits from egg-laying female butterflies.

In addition to the vine types there are about ten species of tree passion flowers. Originating in Ecuador, one of these - *P. macrophylla* - produces huge leaves up to 5 feet long. Also found in South America is the beautiful *P. lindeniana*, which is endangered and may now be extinct in the wild. Its flowers are pure white with deep yellow corona filaments, rather like a water lily. The tropics of the New World are being deforested rapidly and it is likely certain plants will only survive in cultivation.



*P. 'Sunburst'*