

Clerodendrum

FOR CENTRAL FLORIDA

By Eric Schmidt

The genus *Clerodendrum* contains approximately 400 different species of shrubs and vines. Most of these are native to subtropical and tropical regions. Recently, the species has gone under some taxonomic changes. *Clerodendrum* formerly was a member of the *Verbenaceae* Family but now has been placed into the *Lamiaceae* Family making it related to some common garden plants such as lavender (*Lavandula*), mint (*Mentha*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*) and sage (*Salvia*). In addition, several species of *Clerodendrum* have been placed into the genus *Rotheca*.

Many species of *Clerodendrum* are grown for their colorful or fragrant flowers. The flowers are tubular shaped and are produced in clusters or panicles. Some also produce colorful calyxes and fruit following the flowers. Many of these are good butterfly plants. Several species are easily found in local garden centers or nurseries and some of the less common ones can be found in specialty nurseries or plant sales at botanical gardens.

Clerodendrum bungei, Pink Glory Bower, is a shrub that grows 4-6 feet tall. It bears terminal clusters of pink flowers. It flowers heaviest in winter and spring but can bloom in other times of the year. This shrub suckers very heavily and can be invasive if it is not controlled. It grows best in partial shade. The pink flowers attract butterflies. *Clerodendrum bungei* is hardy and native to southeastern Asia. A similar shrub is *C. chinense*, Chinese Glory Bower. It also grows 4-6 feet tall but bears cluster of white fragrant flowers. This species suckers very heavily and is not recommended. It is native to southern China and was formerly known as *C. fragrans* and *C. philippinum*.

Clerodendrum calamitosum, White Butterfly Bush, is a lesser known species that deserves to be more widely grown. It is a shrub growing 3-5 feet tall and bears fragrant white flowers mainly in fall and early winter. The flowers are shaped like butterflies. It grows best in sun or light shade and is native to Indonesia and Malaysia.

Clerodendrum japonicum is also a lesser known species. It is a shrub growing 5-6 feet tall with large, felty leaves. It bears upright, terminal panicles of bright red flowers. This shrub is fast growing and grows in sun or shade. It is native from a wide region in Asia, from northeastern India to southern China, southern Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Clerodendrum minahassae, Starfish Clerodendrum, is a large



shrub or small tree reaching 6-8 feet tall. It bears white flowers throughout the year but more so during the warmer months. This is followed by a red calyx in the shape of a starfish and blue-green fruit. Starfish Clerodendrum grows best in sun or light shade and is native to Indonesia and the Philippines.

Clerodendrum paniculatum, Pagoda Flower, is a shrub growing 5-6 feet tall. It bears erect terminal panicles of orangish red tubular flowers. These panicles are held above the foliage and have a symmetrical shape similar to a pagoda. The flowers attract butterflies, especially swallowtails and zebra longwings, and are produced during the warmer months. Pagoda Flower does sucker heavily but can be easily controlled so that it does not get out of bounds. It will grow in sun or light shade and is native to southeastern Asia. The cultivar 'Borneo Sunset' has leaves that emerge with a maroon coloring. It does not get as tall and does not sucker heavily.

Clerodendrum quadriloculare, Starburst Clerodendrum, is a large shrub with leaves that are dark green on top and reddish purple on the undersides. It can grow 8-10 feet tall and flowers in late winter and early spring. The tubular flowers are light pink and arranged in clusters that resemble fireworks. It grows best in sun or light shade with moist soil. The cultivar 'Brandonii' is a very attractive form with leaves that are variegated giving the foliage a tricolor look. Starburst Clerodendrum is native to New Guinea and the Philippines.

Clerodendrum speciosissimum, Java Glory Bower, is a shrub with soft, downy leaves and grows 4-6 feet tall. It bears



Clerodendrum speciosissimum, close-up

clusters of scarlet flowers at the tips of the stems during the warmer months. These flowers attract butterflies, especially swallowtails. Java Glory Bower will grow in sun or light shade but is aggressive growing, spreading by suckers. It is not recommended unless it can be controlled. It is native to Java.

Clerodendrum wallichii is a large shrub growing 6-8 feet tall but can be trained as a small tree. It has dark green leaves and bears pendant clusters of white flowers during fall. Following the flowers, the calyxes turn red. This shrub grows in sun or shade with moist soil. It was formerly known as *C. nutans* and is native to southeastern Asia.

Rotheca incisa, the Musical Note Flower, was formerly known as *Clerodendrum incisum* and *C. macrosiphon*. It is a smaller shrub

growing 3-5 feet tall. It bears white flowers that when unopened, have the shape of a musical note, then open to reveal red stamens. The flowers are produced occasionally throughout the year. It will grow in sun or shade and is native to eastern Africa.

Rotheca ugandense, the Blue Butterfly Bush, was formerly known as *Clerodendrum ugandense*. During the warm months, it bears blue and white flowers that resemble a butterfly. It grows in sun or light shade with moist soil and is native to tropical Africa.

Rotheca myricoides, formerly *Clerodendrum myricoides*, is very similar but has purple flowers.

In addition to shrubs,

there are several *Clerodendrum* with ornamental flowers that grow as vines. These have twining growth habit and make nice specimens for arbors, fences, or trellises. *Clerodendrum splendens*, Glory Bower Vine, bears scarlet red clusters of flowers in winter and spring. It is a larger vine that needs some room and is native to tropical Africa. *Clerodendrum thomsoniae*, Bleeding Heart Vine, is also from tropical Africa. It is a smaller vine that prefers partial shade. It bears red flowers with white bracts. The cultivar 'Delectum' is a larger growing form that bears red flowers with pink bracts. It flowers heavier and will grow in sun or light shade. 'Variegata' has variegated foliage. One other vine is *Clerodendrum x speciosum*. This is a hybrid between *C. splendens* and *C. thomsoniae*. It bears red flowers with purple bracts. It is a vigorous grower that suckers. This hybrid is very common in old Florida landscapes but is rarely available in nurseries.

**Clerodendrum
quadriloculare** ▶

Clerodendrum 'Brandonii' ▼

