



Rainforest Species for the Garden

Lawrie Smith

From the May 2009 issue of the Study Group Newsletter.

The comment in the Newsletter 64 regarding the use of rainforest species in gardens is very appropriate and of specific interest to those of us who reside in the appropriate climatic areas of the continent. Many of us have trialled rainforest species in our gardens and found them to be excellent and appropriate specimens with their luxuriant notophyll foliage, their unique flowers and fruits. Rainforest species contribute a different character to the garden in comparison to the finer perhaps harsher foliage of sclerophyll type plants.

However, it is very important to know and understand the ultimate size and their habits if these species are to be successfully incorporated into a comprehensive palette of species for the garden. Perhaps the most important aspect is the response to establishing a rainforest tree as a feature specimen - in the rainforest trees are closely spaced and in competing for light, many become emergent giants with tall unbranched trunks and small foliage canopies. When grown as an isolated specimen many rainforest trees are very much smaller displaying an attractive formal and compact habit with a dense foliage canopy supported on small branched trunks - ideal for home gardens and streets.

One attractive species introduced into cultivation from the Daintree rainforest of far north Queensland, which has proved to be extremely successful and useful in Queensland gardens is *Phyllanthus cuscutiflorus*. Like many members of the Euphorbiaceae family it responds extremely well to usual horticultural techniques and has proven to be an excellent plant for formal clipped low hedges, as well as taller informal hedges or screens.

It would be interesting to know if members have trialled and found success with this species in more temperate gardens.