

## Bloedel Plant Profile – The Monkey Plant



The Monkey Plant is a small colourful plant from Brazil. The leaves are dark green on top with silvery-grey veins. Underneath the leaves are purple. The flowers are bright pink tubes. The name ‘Monkey Plant’ comes from the seeds which look like the face of a monkey.<sup>1</sup> The leaves are soft, giving rise to another common name of ‘Trailing velvet plant’.<sup>2</sup>

The Monkey Plant’s Latin name is *Ruellia makoyana*. The first part, *Ruellia*, is the plant Genus. There are many different Ruellias. The second part, *makoyana*, tells you **which** Ruellia it is.

The name *Ruellia* commemorates the French herbalist Jean de la Ruelle (1474-1537)<sup>3</sup>. The Monkey Plant *Ruellia, makoyana*, honours Mr Lambert Jacob Macoy (1790-1873)<sup>4</sup> of Liege, Belgium. He was a horticulturalist and plant importer. He brought many plants into cultivation. There are ten plants in eight plant families given his name. The most well known is probably the ‘Peacock Plant’, *Calathea makoyana*.

Simple observations will tell you a lot about this plant and other plants.

- It has brightly coloured flowers. They will attract pollinators who can see colours. Pollination probably takes place during the day.
- The flowers have long thin tubes. The pollinators most probably have long thin tongues. An example is a hummingbird.
- The underside of the leaf is purple, an adaptation which helps it grow in shade. It probably evolved as a forest floor plant.



The monkey plant is a good indoor plant<sup>5</sup> and has won the Royal Horticultural Society Award of Garden Merit. Hanging baskets are a good way to display the colour under the leaves.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a photos of seeds see: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/xenoflor/4439432896>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-monkey-plant.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean\\_Ruel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Ruel)

<sup>4</sup> <https://plants.jstor.org/stable/10.5555/al.ap.person.bm000004003>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/84001/Ruellia-makoyana/Details>

<sup>6</sup> **Indoor Plant Gardening For Canada** by Laura Peters, Lone Pine Publishing, ISBN 1-55105-389-6, pp 172-173