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17th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20006

AUDIO-VISUAL PROGRAM

SET 197 FLOWERS OF COLOMBIA

There is a wide variety of flowers and plants that grow in Columbia. The coffee shrub is a lucrative plant. From thousands of Columbia's valleys and sheltered from the direct sun rays comes the "suave" coffee for which the country is noted.

Although usually referred to as a tree, coffee is actually an evergreen shrub. Its leaves are dark green and glossy on top and a lighter, duller green underneath. They are 3 to 6 inches (7½ to 15 cm) long and grow opposite each other in long branches. At the points where the pairs of leaves join the branches, many small white blossoms appear at the time of flowering.

The fragrant blossoms fall within a few days and small berries develop that change from dark green to deep crimson as they ripen. The berries ripen about 6 to 7 months after the tree has flowered.

The orchid is the royal flower of the forest. Orchids grow in the tropical regions of the world and in some of the temperate regions.

There are about 15,000 kinds of orchids. Some are as small as your little finger nail. Others are as large as a hat. They have a wide range of colors.

Some orchids are called parasites. Parasites are plants that feed on other plants. Orchids are often found growing on trees or other forest plants, but they are not parasites. They are air plants. They fasten their roots upon the bark of a tree. They draw their food from water, air, and decayed vegetable matter.

A tropical orchid plant does not bloom until it is about seven years old. Some kinds produce flowers only once a year. Others bloom twice a year. The blossoms last a long time: Several months on the plant and from one to three weeks after being cut.

Most of the orchids sold in our flower shops are natives of Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Guatemala and Brazil.



Hibiscus are native to warm or tropical parts of the world so they have grown under glass in temperate countries. In the tropics they are grouped or used as specimen plants in borders or among shrubs and some make fine hedges. Most have a ring of small bracts immediately below the calyx and a long stamen tube which ends in five spreading appendages. The large showy flowers are born in the leaf axils and the leaves are simple and variously shaped.

Rosa is the most important genus, especially in its modern cultivars. Poses are hardy in cool temperate climates, flower freely and continuously throughout the summer and are easy to grow. They prefer good heavy loam unlikely to dry out in the summer. In later years mulches benefit established bushes. The pruning of bush roses (like Hybrid teas and floribundas) is undertaken once a year. Today there are about 250 species and tens of thousands of cultivars.

Datura. Best of the ornamental kinds is probably the double flowered form of *Datura suaveolens*, a tree or large shrub 3 to 5 m (10 to 15 ft.) high, with strong woody stems, ovate-oblong, velvety leaves often white and downy underneath, long and pendulous musk scented flowers of purest white. These hang down like trumpets and flare out at the petal bases like flounced petticoats. They are commonly called Angel's Trumpets.

By the roadsides in Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia one commonly sees small trees weighted with large hanging white, pink orange, or yellow flowers.

All the shrubby *Daturas* stand hard cutting and make good tub plants in cool climates. South American Indians believe it is courting death to sleep underneath *Datura*.

Poinsettia, Yuletide symbol, these flaming beauties bloom over a six months period in protected areas. Actually a shaggy head of leaves forms the red aureole or halo about its inconspicuous yellow flowers with the Ubangi lips in the center. The double red variety *P. plenissima*, has larger blooms and lasts longer on the plant.

Sources:

Hancock, Ralph. Exploring Latin America. Charles Merrill Company, 1946.

Perry, Frances. Flowers of the World. Crown Publishers, Inc. 1972.

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- 197 A A flowering coffee plant.
- 197 B A ripe coffee berry.
- 197 C An orchid. The Cattleya orchid is bright pink.
- 197 D An orchid.
- 197 E An orchid.
- 197 F An orchid.
- 197 G Hibiscus.
- 197 H Roses.
- 197 I Datura.
- 197 J Poinsettia, Fire plant, Painted leaf.