

Abutilon

The multi-hued flower



Abutilon is also called as Chinese Bell Flower, Chinese Lantern, Mallow and Indian Mallow. Although the flower is not related to the genus of Maple, it is also called Flowering Maple. *Abutilon hybridum*, as the leaves of some species look like actual maple. The flowering maple is grown outside in moderately hot territories and often taken as a house plant.

Theoretically the Abutilon season is from April through June, though the flower blooms during winter too. You may have spotted enough of Abutilon even during your kindergarten period, without much

knowledge. Some Abutilons look like dwarf maple trees, but they bear mallow-like flowers (hence, Indian mallow).

Abutilon is one of the largest of approximately 150 species of broadleaf evergreens in the mallow family (Malvaceae). This genus includes annuals, perennials, shrubs, and small trees from 1-10 m tall, and is found in the tropical and subtropical regions of all continents. The leaves are alternate, unlobed or palmately lobed with 3-7 lobes. The flowers are easy to identify with five petals mostly red, pink, orange, yellow or white.

distinctive varieties, with leaves being generally pale green.

Abutilon provides food for newly hatched wingless butterflies and moths like Yellow-banded Skipper and *Chionodes marionna*. Subtropical areas have this as a well liked garden plant. *A. Ochevici* and *A. vitifolium* are tougher species of Abutilon hardy in areas with balance warmth and frost. Cool climate inhabitants are best advised to keep the plant in a container, while having it in home during summer.

Abutilon x hybridum is a popular group of hybrids that are semi-tropical, frost-tender shrubs typically growing 2-3 m tall. The buds, looking much like a lantern, open to solitary, hanging loosely, bell-to-cup-

shaped flowers to eight cm diameter with five overlapping petals and significant staminal columns typical of the mallow family.

Abutilon mosaic is a viral disease spread on some Abutilon species, especially flowering maple. The disease's arrival is marked by a bright whitish to yellow mosaic style.

The yellow patches are sharply spread by leaf veins. Symptoms may differ due to light intensity. The disease is identified as a beneficial plant disease, as it causes unusually elegant mosaic styles on affected leaves, though it affects the growth and the strength of the flower. Many infected plants are ornamentally valuable. This virus was first reported in Germany.



Rupert's story



We all know deer are innocent as well as tricky running away from being a prey of untimely deaths. You will realize how extraordinarily lucky Rupert was to escape a natural untimely death. Six-inch little Rupert was born following a vain veterinarian attempt to save his mother. Weighing just over a pound, the little deer is now settled in an incubator in the intensive care unit at Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital in Buckinghamshire.

As Les Stocker, founder of Tiggywinkles, says Rupert's mother had serious injuries until vets failed to rescue her life. Rupert could breathe only after he could get it into the incubator on oxygen. Rupert is now being fed by a tube, and has recently opened his eyes.



The pictures portray the darling deer pulling an ingenious pose. The hospital staff has a positive hope on the recovery of Rupert

African Wild Dog

The learned hunter

The African wild dog, *Lycan pictus*, is a carnivorous mammal of the Canidae family, found only in Africa, especially in scrub savanna and other lightly wooded areas. It is also called the African hunting dog, the Cape hunting dog, the spotted dog, or the painted wolf in English, Wildhond in Afrikaans, and Mbwa mwitu in Swahili.

The African wild dog has a pelage with an irregular pattern of black, yellow, and white, distinctive for each individual. The term *Lycan pictus* is derived from the Greek for "painted wolf". It is the only canid species to lack dewclaws on the forelimbs.

Adults typically weigh 17-36 kilograms. The lanky animal stands about 75cm at the shoulder, with a head and body length averaging about 100cm and a tail of 30 to 45cm. Animals in southern Africa are generally larger than those in the eastern or western Africa.

There is little sexual dimorphism, though judging by skeletal dimensions,

males are usually three to seven percent. The premolars are relatively large compared to other canids, allowing it to consume a large quantity of bone, much like hyenas. The heel of the lower carnassial M1 is crested with a single cusp, which enhances the shearing capacity of teeth and thus the speed at which prey can be consumed. This feature is called treacher heel and is shared with two other canids: the Asian Dhole and the South American bush dog.

According to a study, the African wild dog had a Bite Force Quotient of 142, the highest of any extant carnivorous mammal. The BFQ is essentially the strength of bite as measured against the animal's mass.

The African wild dog reproduces at any time of year, although mating peaks between March and June during the second half of the rainy season. Litters can contain 2-19 pups, though 10 is most usual. The time between births is usually 12-14 months, though it can also be as short as six months if all of the previous young die. The typical gestation period is approximately 70 days. Pups are usually born in an abandoned den dug by other animals such as those of the Aardvark. Weaning takes place at about 10 weeks. After three months, the den is abandoned and the pups begin to run with the pack. At 8-11 months they can kill small prey, but they are not proficient until about 12-14 months, at which time they can fend for themselves. Pups reach sexual maturity at the age of 12-18 months.

Females will disperse from their birth pack at 14-30 months of age and join other packs that lack sexually mature females. Males typically do not leave the pack they were born to. This is the opposite situation to that in most other social mammals, where a group of related females forms the core of the pack or similar group. In the African Wild Dog, the females compete for access to males that will help to rear their offspring. In a typical pack, males outnumber females by a factor of two to one, and only the dominant female is usually able to rear pups. This unusual situation may have evolved to ensure that packs



do not over-extend themselves by attempting to rear too many litters at the same time. The species is also unusual in that other members of the pack including males may be left to guard the pups while the mother joins the hunting group, the requirement to leave adults behind to guard the pups may decrease hunting efficiency in smaller packs.

A captive breeding and translocation program at Mkomazi Game Reserve, the first of its kind in East



Africa, was founded in 1995 to provide dogs for a multinational effort to stabilise their numbers and to reintroduce the species to its traditional homeland. The dogs are allocated to four breeding compounds to maximise genetic diversity. An extensive veterinary program has been set up to improve their immunity to disease.

Remarkably, this large-animal hunting tactic appears to be a learned behavior, passed on from generation to generation within specific hunting packs, rather than an instinctive behaviour found commonly within the species. Some studies have also shown that other information, such as the location of watering holes, may be passed on in a similar fashion. An unusual chirping or squeaking sound, similar to a bird.

After a successful hunt, hunters regurgitate meat for those that remained at the den during the hunt, such as the dominant female and the pups. They will also feed other pack members such as the sick, injured or very old that cannot keep up.

Shoot for fun 'n' fame



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