

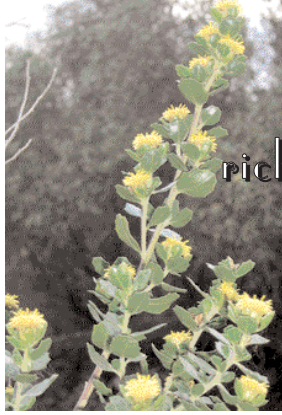
Baccharis is a genus of perennials and shrubs in the family Asteraceae. They are commonly known as baccharises but sometimes referred to as "brooms", because many members have small thin leaves resembling the true brooms. They are not at all related to these however, but belong to an entirely different lineage of eudicotids. *B. halimifolia* is commonly known as 'groundsel bush', and in fact Baccharis is not too distant from the true groundsels. Senecio.

The 250-400 species occur throughout the Americas. The genus is named after Bacchus, the Roman god of wine. If present, the leaves are borne along the stems in alternate fashion. Flowers are usually white or pinkish.

There are no ray flowers, but many disk flowers (which are staminate) and pistillate flowers.

Several species are of interest for cultivation, as the dense but flexible stem structure makes for a good windbreak. Other species, particularly Eastern Baccharis (*B. halimifolia*), have become invasive weeds in places such as Australia and Spain, where they are not native. On the other hand, a few Baccharis species (spe-

Baccharis



The flower rich in nectar

Baccharis species are used as food plants by the larvae of some Lepidoptera species, such as the swift moths *Phymatopus californicus* and *P. hectoides*.

cially from the northern Andes) are almost extinct due to habitat destruction. Plants of this genus are rich in terpenes, and some are used in native or folk medicine. One that has been specifically described from Chilean Baccharis is viscifera. Baccharis species are used as food plants by the larvae of some Lepidoptera



species, such as the swift moths *Phymatopus californicus* and *P. Hectoides*. Those of the leaf-miner moths *Bucculatrix dominaria* and *B. Seperabilis* feed exclusively on *Bush Baccharis*. *B. ivella* has been found on Eastern Baccharis, and *B. variabilis* is a polyphagous species which has been recorded on various Baccharis. The Coleophora case-bearers *C. Inosyridella* and *C. viscidiflorella* are polyphagous species whose larvae have been recorded on the Bush Baccharis as well as other plants.

Caterpillars of the owl moth *Schinia ocularis* feed exclusively on *Broom Baccharis*. The flowers are rich in nectar, and several species are good honey plants. Particularly *B. dracunculifolia* is highly esteemed by beekeepers.



- Internet Gardener



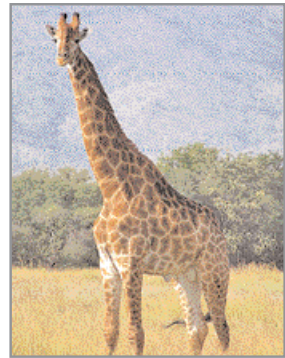
Giraffe

The giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) is an African even-toed ungulate mammal, the tallest of all land-living animal species, and the largest ruminant. Males can be 4.8 to 5.5 metre tall and weigh up to 1,700 kilograms (3,800 pounds). The record-sized bull, shot in Kenya in 1934, was 5.67 m (19.2 ft) tall and weighed approximately 2,000 kg. Females are generally shorter, and weigh less than the males do.

The giraffe is related to deer and cattle, but is placed in a separate family, the *Giraffidae*, consisting only of the giraffe and its closest relative, the okapi. Its range extends from Chad to South Africa. Giraffes can inhabit savannas, grasslands, or open woodlands. They prefer areas enriched with acacia growth. They drink large quantities of water and, as a result, they can spend long periods of time in dry, arid areas. When searching for more food they

will venture into areas with denser foliage. The species name *camelopardalis* is derived from its early Roman name, where it was described as having characteristics of both a camel and a leopard. The English word camelopard first appeared in the 14th century and survived in common usage well into the 19th century.

Giraffids evolved from a 3 metre (10 ft) tall antelope-like mammal which roamed Europe and Asia 30-50 million years ago. The earliest giraffid was the *Climacoceras*, which still resembled deer, having large antler-like ossicones. It first appeared in the early Miocene period. As the lineage went on the genera *Palaotragus* and *Samoitherium* appeared in the early to mid-Miocene. One species of *Palaotragus* developed more



giraffe-like ossicones. They both were tall at the shoulder but still had short necks. From there the genus *Giraffa* evolved in the Pliocene period and Okapia evolved in the Pleistocene. The modern long-necked giraffe, *Giraffa camelopardalis*, appeared one million years ago.

Though giraffes of these populations interbred freely under conditions of captivity, suggesting that they are subspecific populations, genetic testing published in 2007 has been interpreted to show that there may be at least six species of giraffe that are reproductively isolated and not interbreeding, even though no natural obstacles, like mountain ranges or impassable

rivers block their mutual access. In fact, the study found that the two giraffe populations that live closest to each other, the reticulated giraffe (*G. camelopardalis reticulata*) of north Kenya, and the Masai giraffe (*G. c. tippelskirchi*) in south Kenya, separated genetically between 0.13 and 1.62 million years, judging from genetic drift in nuclear and mitochondrial DNA.

The implications for conservation of as many as eleven such cryptic species and sub-species were summarised by David Brown for BBC News: "Lumping all giraffes into one species obscures the reality that some kinds of giraffe are on the brink. Some of these populations number only a few hundred individuals and need immediate protection."



Green Fingers

RAVINDHU MAHENDRA

Upul, one of my best mates from the drama school, invited me to spend the day with him. This was our first meeting since his mother had died. She left this world leaving him with great responsibility to look after two younger brothers and the father.

Upul seemed to be brave enough to grapple but I was more concerned about his father. According to Upul his father was a man who was deeply in love with his wife. It's still painful to recollect the way he behaved on the funeral.

Upul took me down to a magnificent lake. There were lots of blue water lilies. Mild morning sun rays were kissing their deep purple petals and the sun patterned sigma. The gentle breeze scattered the heavenly perfume while they were floating just above peaceful waters. That little moment seemed like the heaven and earth blending together into one magnificent painting.

Upul was looking at the flowers and it almost looked like he was meditating. A few minutes later he broke the silence. "Can you describe scent of a flower?"

"I was speechless and I still can't find the answer as I'm unable to explain the scent of a blue water lily via this article to you if you haven't sensed it yet."

"My father is an amazing man. He is the simplest man you could ever see but he does amazing things."

"Such as?"

"Can you believe he is the one who introduced these water lilies here...?"

It was almost incredible for

me to believe one man could plant such a great number of water lilies in a reasonably big lake.

"When my father was going out with my mother this lake bank was their favourite place. He struggled a lot to get my mother's hand as her parents didn't accept him for a lot of reasons. But he never wanted to give up the love of his life. They made a wish that one day they would fill this lake with blue water lilies so they can take first bunch of their



Nil Upul photographed by the writer in Anuradhapura.

own flowers to the temple, if they ever get a chance to get married."

Making a long story short they've finally got married with an uphill struggle and gone away for honeymoon. I suppose somewhere nice. With a little smile Upul took a deep breath.

"They brought this kind of water lily plant back from their honeymoon and planted it here, since then they never abandoned their project. You know this particular kind

mainly spreads by the little plants which appear on the lily pads. The plantlets slowly float around for a while until they get a chance to get attached to mud. My mother and father used to collect them, tie them to cobbles and throw them back into the water so the plants could sink down quickly to the bottom. That really sped up the spreading process here. They kept doing this for almost for twenty years. Now my mother is gone but he still does it like a ritual singlehand-

ed. I think that's how he copes with the greatest loss in his life."

"Did they manage to take the flowers to the temple?"

"That's even more interesting, no... they didn't, they both felt very sorry to pluck them, at the end that's how my name became Upul."

They asked the Buddha for forgiveness, they offered the flowers while they were smiling in the lake and made a promise to call their first child a water lily. Did you know

Upul means water lilies?" We spent the whole day by the lake.

The sun started to fade gradually, as sun light fades the water lilies started closing themselves like protesting the forthcoming moonlight. "Do you know most of them will open again tomorrow as the sun rises. They maintain this habit roughly for four days even though you pluck them as long as they are in water and the scent lasts for a few more days after they have permanently shut."

Blue water lilies - *Nil upul* or *nil manel* in Sinhala - is the national flower even though it is not endemic to Sri Lanka. This regal looking flower is rather purple than blue and can be grown as a garden plant even in a smallest pond in a sunny spot with about six inch nutrients rich mud and one foot water. In larger ponds, depth until four foot they grow much better and mainly propagate by division from rhizomes or the saplings appear on the centre of the lily pads.

If you still haven't seen this magnificent flower and there is no lake or pond around where you live, the best place to see them is a popular temple. Unfortunately you can only see them there as cut flowers but you can still smell the heavenly scent which no one can describe properly.

Make sure you obtain permission from the Buddha if someone has offered them to him already. Hopefully the Buddha wouldn't mind as he might never have suggested anyone to offer him flowers.

"Can you describe scent of a flower?" echoes in my mind. Can you really.....?"

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Only for dog lovers!

If you are a dog lover and can provide a loving home to these very loyal adorable doggies please contact Derrin or Plumie on 0773262777 / 0719104541.

Three-year old Floppy is brown and white (Male). Spongy turned one in November, who looks

more Pomeranian physically with deep bark (Female) and Lassie is two years.

All these dogs are fully vaccinated.

Their owner is migrating and is looking for somebody who will lovingly take away their project. You Owners request to be kept posted of doggies

