



TRUMPET TREES IN THE PINK

Canopies of spectacular flowers dot Southern California from early winter through spring. The Arboretum introduced the trees to the region. BY JAMES E. HENRICH

THE PRESENCE OF TRUMPET TREES (*Tabebuia*) in the landscapes of Southern California is attributable to the musings of Dr. Russell J. Seibert, director of the Arboretum from 1950 to 1955. He was perhaps the first person to suggest the trees be considered as desirable candidates for evaluation. However, seed sources from South America were unreliable in the early 1950s. Dr. Samuel Ayres, Jr., president of the board of trustees of the then California Arboretum Foundation, Inc., fulfilled the desire by collecting seeds of several species while periodically vacationing in Brazil between 1953 and 1955.

The Arboretum's landscape was an open canvas in its early decades. Much of the Arboretum's living collection was originally conceived as an evaluation pool from which noteworthy plants could be selected for introduction to the nursery trade to enhance the beauty of Southern California with exotic flora. The following four trumpet tree taxa were evaluated at the Arboretum and distributed to the local green industry to propagate and sell: *Tabebuia chrysotricha* (golden trumpet tree), introduced in 1964, flowers bright yellow; *T. impetiginosa* (pink trumpet tree), introduced in 1979, flowers dark lavender to pink; *T. impetiginosa* 'Pink Cloud', introduced in 1984, distinguished by its light pink flowers; and *T. impetiginosa* 'Raspberry', introduced in 1986, distinguished by its dark lavender to dark pink flowers. The abundance of trumpet trees in our landscapes and on-going availability at nurseries are a testament to the genius of Dr. Seibert and the success of the Arboretum's plant introduction program.

In addition to these taxa, our living collection contains: *Tabebuia* 'Apricot', *T. heterophylla* x *T. 'Carib Queen'*,



Trumpet trees line a street in Glendale. *Tabebuia impetiginosa*, left. *Tabebuia* 'Apricot' below.

T. impetiginosa 'Paulensis', *T. ochracea* and *T. umbellata*, plus more in the nursery. All non-cultivar trees in the living collection have been grown from seeds. This method of propagation has yielded tremendous diversity in form, floral morphology, flower color and length of flowering season—traits essential for the success of the plant evaluation and introduction program.

Trumpet trees belong to the trumpet creeper family (Bignoniaceae). The genus contains about 100 species, all from tropical/subtropical America. *Tabebuia* was recently changed to *Handroanthus* to reflect more accurate nomenclature which will make the two most



common species *H. chrysotrichus* and *H. impetiginosus*. The Arboretum is conservative with plant names and will retain *Tabebuia* for the immediate future. Additionally, the use of the name *T. impetiginosa* (*H. impetiginosus*) for the pink trumpet trees in Southern California has recently been questioned. They may actually be *T. heptaphylla* (*H. heptaphyllus*); confusion may go back to first germplasm collected and grown by the Arboretum that may have been misidentified as *T. impetiginosa* and not *T. heptaphylla*.

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Henrich, James E. 2015. "Trumpet trees in the pink." *Exploring the arboretum : magazine for the members of the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden* 2015:winter/spring, 10–11.

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