

SAXIFLORA

PLATE 5

Saxifraga cortusaefolia
(Saxifragaceae)

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This lovely representative of the Diptera section, from shaded rocks in the mountains throughout Japan and in Korea, commends itself by its very late flowering season and by the beauty of its foliage, which alone is a sufficient reward to the gardener.

Though more robust, this plant is closely related, and similar in flower effect to, but without the runners of, the familiar *S. sarmentosa*, the so-called strawberry begonia, widely known as a house plant, and less generally as a quite hardy garden plant in shaded and dampish situations.

The plant flowers, in Poughkeepsie, N. Y., in October, often lasting in flower into November. At the time of this writing (November 7) the flowers are nearly past. It presents a peculiar, ghost-like appearance in its setting of brown, fallen leaves and naked stalks of other plants. It appears to be reliably hardy and thrives lustily in the shadier nooks of our garden, in a rather rich woodland soil which is not subject to drying out in summer. We have grown it for upwards of ten years and never knew it to be injured by severe winters. It came to us from the garden of the late Mr. Clarence Lown of our city, under the name *S. Fortunei*, which name is often confused and interchanged with that of *S. cortusaefolia*. Because of this confusion, the following comment may be of interest :

S. Fortunei of Hooker is a very closely related plant, brought to England from cultivation in Japan, by Fortune, and first described by Hooker in Curtis Botanical Magazine, plate 5377, in 1863. This plant has subsequently been known in botanical literature mainly, if not exclusively, from cultivated specimens, though Franchet reported it from Tibet.

Fortune's plant appears, from literature, and from Hooker's plate, to be so close to *S. cortusaefolia* that it is best regarded as a variety of the latter (var. *Fortunei* of Maximowicz, 1871). It appears to differ from the earlier known *S. cortusaefolia* only by its toothed petals.

Illustrations in l'Illustration Horticole, vol. 11, plate 398 (1864) and in other works (Flore des Serres, 1875), of a striking, variegated plant, over the title: *S. Fortunei* var. *tricolor*, are likely to cause confusion. The subject of these plates belongs undoubtedly with *S. sarmentosa*.

The present drawing of *S. cortusaefolia* was made from material in The New York Botanical Garden, originating from our Poughkeepsie garden.

Our plant is a deciduous perennial, forming a dome-shaped tuft of basal foliage produced by several, huddled crowns which may be easily separated

in the spring. Each spring division will grow into an attractive plant in one season, and even flower in the autumn.

The leaves are roundish to kidney-shaped in general outline, mostly less than three inches wide, mostly with five to seven palmate lobes of unequal size. The lobes are unevenly, serrately toothed, and sparsely fringed, here and there, mostly in the sinuses between lobes, with bristly hairs. The texture of the leaves is fleshy. The degree of hairiness on the leaves and petioles is more pronounced in the early than in the later stages of their life.

The upper surface of the foliage is a rich green, smooth lacquer, very sparsely beset with curved, bristly hairs which are placed upon wart-like protuberances. The under surface is of a rougher finish, and of a striking, deep claret color which tends to fade toward autumn. It is more thickly set with hooked, bristly hairs. The petioles, in our plants to three and a half inches long, are of the same claret tint, with very few, longer, softer hairs; and they clasp the short, contracted stems with a fleshy, deep red, somewhat hairy sheath.

The erect flowering stems grow mostly to ten or twelve inches high in our garden, and occasionally half again as high. They are fleshy and smooth, except for a very few longish hairs, and bear one or more fleshy bracts below the inflorescence. Other, smaller, bracts occur at each branching of the panicle.

The main branches of the inflorescence are practically hairless, but the ultimate divisions and the petioles are minutely glandular-hairy.

Our plants bear from thirty to fifty flowers in a panicle. The flowers are white, except for the bright green calyx lobes, which are plainly visible at close inspection. In our plants, one of the five petals is elongated to two or three times the average length of the remaining, which are of unequal length. The longer petal is to three-quarters of an inch long. All petals are entire, acutish, linear-lanceolate, and, in our plants, only faintly narrowed toward the base.

From recorded descriptions it appears that in this species sometimes not only one, but two or three of the petals may be greatly elongated.

The ten stamens are of unequal length, about as long as the shorter petals. The filaments are white, spreading, and tipped with brown anthers. The bright green carpels are united to above the middle, the two styles divergent, and tipped with a mere dark point of a stigma.

P. J. VAN MELLE