

Bartlettina sordida Blue mist flower



Bartlettina sordida Blue Mist flower, showing the profusion of stamens. Next to Bunya Lawn GBG

Bartlettina sordida Blue Mist Flower comes from the cloud forests of Mexico. It used to be called *Eupatorium megalophyllum* (from the Greek words mega meaning big and phyllum meaning leaf) but Botanists have recently changed its name to *Bartlettina sordida*. It looks like a giant *Ageratum*, an annual in the same tribe, Eupatorieae, as the *Bartlettina*.

Bartlettina sordida is a fast growing perennial species in the Aster (Daisy) family which is an evergreen with an upright habit and woody branches. It grows to 2.4 metres tall and 1.2 metres wide but can be pruned to any height. It has reddish-purple branches clothed in slightly rough, dark green leaves with prominent venation and paler undersides. It's big, velvety leaves, growing up to 25 cm long and 20 cm wide, give the plant a great tropical look.

In spring, the flower stalks rise above the foliage. Each flower cluster can get up to 300 mm across. This unusual shrub makes massive clusters of fuzzy bluish-lilac flowers, like big, puffy pom-poms or a bursting fireworks appearance. The inflorescence is a terminal corymbose panicle, 20-30 cm across. The large clusters of scented flowers appear in spring, mauve to lilac to magenta-blue in colour. The fuzzy look of the clusters is due to the thread-like stamens on each flower. The blooms have a nice fragrance, like lilacs.

The seed has a fluffy pappus and is easily dispersed by wind. They are pollinator plants, attractive to butterflies.

Propagation is via seed or semi hardwood cuttings taken in autumn and winter or from prunings after flowering, in late spring. It can become a weed in moist cool habitats and has been declared a weed in New Zealand and is on New Zealand's National Pet Plant Accord and is prohibited but not yet in Australia. In Australia it is very rare in cultivation and is only found in botanical gardens. This plant does best in mild temperatures and might not thrive in a hot climate. The plant grows best in 4-29°C with cool nights. It won't thrive in areas that get warmer, particularly if nights are warm. It can probably handle a few degrees of frost, but needs to be protected. It can be grown indoors in a large pot. Since it comes from dense cloud forests, it prefers filtered sunlight or bright shade. It needs protection from strong afternoon sun and likes rich, well-draining soil that is kept evenly moist. Over 40% humidity is best.

We have two of these wonderful plants in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. One can be found just past the Purple Beach tree, with beautiful hellebores growing underneath, in the limey soil from shell deposits that were used by the lime kilns nearby. If you continue along the hedge walk to the left, you'll find *Barlettina sordida*, which, in September, has buds about to burst into flower. The other plant has been pruned so will be later to flower this year and is in a sunnier position on the Bunya Lawn on the south side of the garden near the Camellia walk.

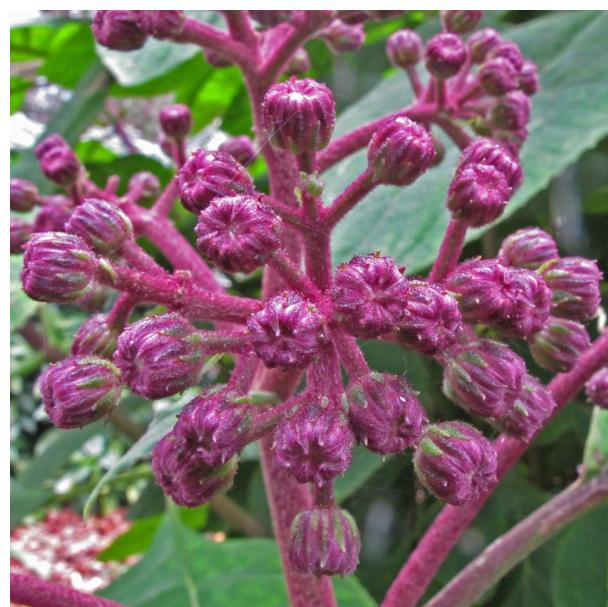
Glossary

Corymb: a more or less flat-topped inflorescence, in which the flower stems start from different points but all reach about the same level.

Corymbose: adjective of corymb.

Panicle: an inflorescence in which the main axis has several lateral branches, each of which is branched. Because these flowers are daisies, the secondary branches have an inflorescent. This inflorescence is a head, called a capitulum, that contains many tiny flowers.

Pappus: The fruit (seed case) of a daisy is surrounded by hairs or bristles that are the sepals of the flower. This series of bristles is called the pappus. The pappus aids wind dispersal of the seed.



Top: Blue Mist Flower, Bunya Lawn
 Middle: Large leaves
 Bottom: Flower buds showing terminal corymbose panicle
 All GBG

Bartlettina sordida Summary

Order: Asterales

Family: Asteraceae

Tribe: Eupatorieae

Genus: *Bartlettina*

Species: *B. sordida*

Origin: Cloud forests of Mexico

Location in GBG: See map and description above.

References

Wikipedia article on *Bartlettina sordida*

Encyclopaedia of Garden Plants, Readers Digest, Sydney 1998

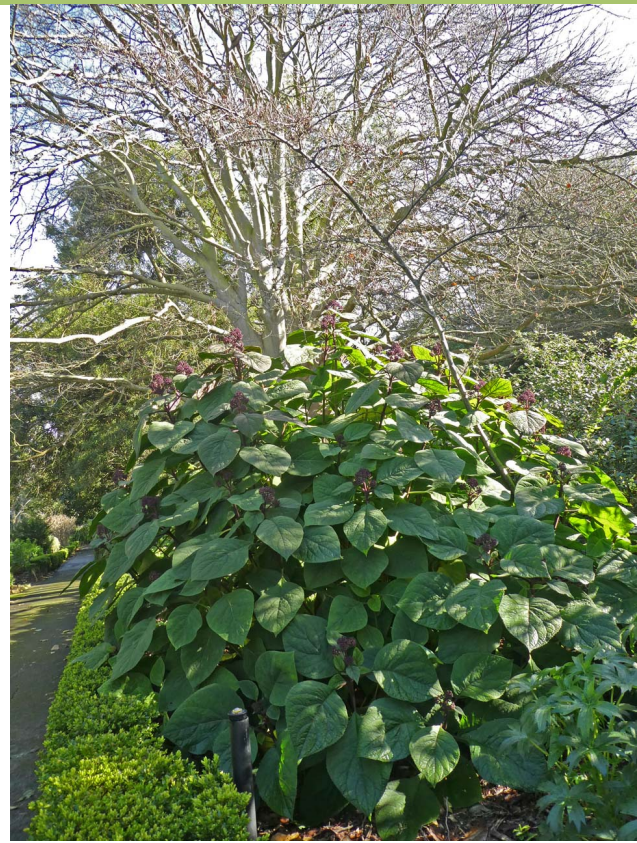
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Australian Weed Management Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia

Jane Edmanson's shrubs at Como House

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Google



Bartlettina sordida with Purple Beech in the background, GBG.



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