

# Flowers at The Old House



an  
Amuseum Companion



## OLD HOUSE FLOWERS

There are hundreds of different plants on St. Martin. Some are native and found only in our part of the Caribbean. Others have been brought from all over the world—as food and medicine, for their beauty or by accident. At The Old House in French Quarter, a historic site where Amuseum Naturalis is located, we have documented over 100 plant species. We have collected images of their flowers here. We have also included some information about the plants and how they are used.

We have divided the plants into groups by their general size and shape, to make this book easy to use. Succulents have fleshy parts that store water. Vines have climbing or spreading stems. Trees are tall woody plants. Shrubs are smaller woody plants. Herbs are smaller plants that don't have woody stems.

Many of the plants in this book were identified by Flora of the Eastern Caribbean Facebook group members, including: Carel de Haseth, Jonas Hochart, Kevel Lindsay, Naqqi Manco and Steve Maldonado Silvestrini.

*Above: Waterleaf (left) and West Indian Cherry (right).*

# Succulents

Succulents are adapted to live in dry areas because they can store water. Cacti are succulents, but there are other kinds of succulents as well. Cacti and succulents are often found where other plants can't survive. On St. Martin, this can be rock walls, cliffs or rocky shorelines. In other areas, it can be harder for succulents to survive because faster-growing plants can grow over them.

*Turk's Head Cactus (Melocactus intortus)* This native cactus is also known as Barrel Cactus or Pope's head. The "cap" is called a cephalium and that is where the small pink flowers grow. The fruits of this cactus are also small and pink, and they are edible. This cactus is threatened by habitat destruction and animals like goats and donkeys.

*Spanish Lady (Opuntia triacantha)* This kind of prickly pear cactus is native to St. Martin and nearby areas of the Caribbean. It has many names, including: Jumping Prickly Pear, Jumping Prickly Apple, Raquette Volante, French Prickle, Jumping Cassie, Suckers and Sucking Cassie. Parts of the cactus can become attached to animals or clothing as if they had jumped on.

*Aloe Vera (Aloe vera)* Aloe vera is originally from the Arabian Peninsula, but it grows well on dry, sunny St. Martin. Aloe was a major export product in Aruba for many years. Small wooden troughs on legs, tilted at one end, were used to collect the aloe sap. Aloe vera is often used to treat sunburn and dry skin. It is also used for many other medicinal purposes.







## Vines

Vines send long stems or runners out or up. This allows them to quickly cover large spaces. On the beach, vines like the Beach Morning Glory can spread out over large sandy areas where other plants can't survive. When they do this, they help keep sand from getting washed away by the sea.

Many vines grow on trees, fences and other structures. This lets them reach sunlight without having to grow a thick trunk. Some vines, like Coralita, can cover and smother the plants they grow on.

Vines can be important after hurricanes. Many vines grow faster than trees, quickly providing leaves, flowers and fruits that animals can eat while forests regrow.

*Above: Goatbush (left) and Water Lemon (right).*



*Beach Morning Glory (Ipomoea pes-caprae)* This vine is found on beaches and keeps sand from being washed away. It is also known as Goat Vine, Sea Vine, Sea Bean and Patate Bord de Mer. The leaves, roots and seeds of this plant are used medicinally, in particular for stomach and bladder problems.

*Obscure Morning Glory (Ipomoea obscura)* Native to Africa and Asia, this plant is used medicinally and its leaves are edible.

*Rock Rosemary (Merremia quinquefolia)* This native vine is also known as Snakevine.

*Noyau Vine (Merremia dissecta)*  
This native vine is also known as Bini Bini, Sprain Bush, Saba Spice Bush and Pate d'Amande.

*Slipplejack (Serjania sp.)* These vines are from the Soapberry family.







*Coralita (Antigonon leptopus)* This vine is well known for its pink flowers. It is also called Coral Vine, Bee Bush, Cemetery Vine, Mexican Creeper and Zeb Semitye. It is native to Central America and Mexico. In the Caribbean, it is a problem because it can cover and kill native plants. It produces edible tubers underground.

*Malabar Spinach (Basella alba)*  
Also known as Spinach Vine, this plant is grown in gardens for its edible leaves.

*Goatbush (Stigmaphyllon emarginatum)* Also called Wiss, this native vine is common on stone walls and fences.

*Maiden Apple (Momordica charantia)* This Asian vine has many uses and names, including Cerasee, Lizard Food, Snake Apple Bush, Washer Woman and Bitter Melon.

*Burr Gherkin (Cucumis anguria)*  
This spiny cucumber is from Africa, but is also known as West Indian Gherkin, Maroon Cucumber, West Indian Gourd and Wild Cucumber.







*Hoopvine (Trichostigma octandrum)*  
This native vine is also known as  
*Hoop Wiss, White Hoop, Liane à  
Terre and Liane Bawik.*



*Trinidad Trumpet Vine (Bignonia  
corymbosa)* This non-native vine is  
grown for its beautiful flowers.



*Queen's Wreath (Petrea volubilis)*  
This non-native ornamental vine is  
also known as *Purple Wreath, Lilac  
and Liane Violette.*

*Yellow Dad (Cuscuta sp.)* These  
parasitic vines are also known as  
*Yellow Dodder, Yellow Death and  
Love Vine.* Some species are native to  
St. Martin.



*Water Lemon (Passiflora laurifolia)*  
This vine from the passion fruit  
family has a soft, fuzzy fruit similar  
to a passion fruit, but much sweeter.



*Dutchman's Laudanum (Passiflora  
rubra)* This native plant from the  
passion fruit family is also known as  
*Snakeberry Vine and Bat Wing.*





## Trees

Trees are plants that have grown tall to collect sunlight. They have a woody trunk that supports their branches and transports water and nutrients. They usually live a long time.

Trees are important for many reasons. They are big enough to provide shade and shelter. Their deep roots can access water during the dry season when other plants may die. Big trees can produce huge amounts of leaves, flowers and fruit that feed all kinds of animals. Trees on beaches and coastlines help protect the island from erosion.

Humans use trees for shelter, food, wood and medicine. Trees are some of the most important resources on the island. They can also be very beautiful.

*Above: Lignum Vitae (left) and Flamboyant (right).*





*Calabash (Crescentia cujete)* This native tree produces a fruit with a hard shell that is used to make bowls and more. The tree is also known as Calebassier, Kalbas and Bowlie.



*White Cedar (Tabebuia heterophylla)* This native tree grows quickly and was used for timber. It is also known as Cedar, White Wood, Poirier and White Poui.



*Lignum Vitae (Guaiacum officinale)* This endangered native tree was overharvested for its wood, which is the hardest in the world. It is also known as Gaïac, Palo Santo, Bois Saint and Guayacán.

*Sea Grape (Coccoloba uvifera)* This tree is one of the most important coastal trees in the Caribbean. Their roots protect beaches from erosion. The trees themselves are popular for the shade and fruit they provide. Each tree is male or female, and only the female trees produce fruit. In the images below, the left shows female flowers and the right shows male flowers.



*West Indian Cherry (Malpighia emarginata)* Also known as Barbados Cherry and Acerola, this tree is loved for its bright red fruits, which are high in vitamin C.





*Flamboyant (Delonix regia)* Originally from Madagascar, this tree is grown all over the world for its beautiful flowers. It is also known as the Royal Poinciana, Flame Tree and Flame of the Forest. On St. Martin, it is also known as the July Tree. It is said that branches of blooming Flamboyant were carried by people celebrating emancipation in the Dutch territory in 1863. To this day, it is a national symbol on both sides of the island.



*Scarlet Cordia (Cordia sebestena)* Native to the American tropics, this tree is also known as Red Cordia and Mapou Rouge. The fruit of this tree are edible, but undesirable.

*Tamarind (Tamarindus indica)* Also known as the Tamon Tree, this large tree was brought from Africa. It is used to provide shade to livestock and its fruit are used in foods and drinks still enjoyed today.

*Cough Bush (Gliricidia sepium)* This Central American tree is also known as Rainfall Tree, Quickstick and Glory Cedar. It is used as a remedy for cough and other conditions. Its flowers are edible.

*Orchid Tree (Bauhinia variegata)* This tree is not related to orchids, but does have a beautiful flower. It is native to Asia and various parts are used in both food and medicine.







*Papaya (Carica papaya)* This tree is grown primarily for its fruit, but it also has a wide variety of medicinal uses. It is probably native to Central America, and was likely brought to the Caribbean by Amerindian people.



*Soursoap (Annona muricata)* This native fruit is also known as Corossol and Guyabano. It is often used to make juice. The leaves are often used as a tea to improve sleep.



*Sugar Apple (Annona squamosa)* This sweet native fruit is also known as Sweet Sop. Sweet and creamy, it is usually eaten fresh. Various parts of the tree are also used medicinally.

*Cashew (Anacardium occidentale)* This native fruit tree is also called the Cherry Tree, Cherry Nut Tree and Wild Almond. The cashew apple is eaten as a fruit and the seed can be toasted and eaten like a nut.

*Noni (Morinda citrifolia)* Also known as Jumbie Breadfruit, Jumbie Soursoap, Dog Dumpling, Pain Killer and Vomit Fruit, this fruit has a strong odor. It is used medicinally.

*Beach Almond (Terminalia catappa)* This non-native tree is known as Indian Almond, Seaside Almond and just Almond. On St. Martin, the almonds are often used to make sugar cakes.





*Cusha (Vachellia sp.)* There are several native Acacia trees on St. Martin, also known as Kosha, Cashaw and other similar names. They are used for their wood, resin and tannin.



*Tan-tan (Leucaena leucocephala)* This Central American tree is also known as Pouï Pouï, Goat Meat and River Tamarind. It grows quickly and was used to restore nitrogen to soil between other crops.



*Chaste Tree (Vitex agnus-castus)* Native to the Mediterranean area, this tree has beautiful flowers and a pleasant smell. It is used medicinally, and was once believed to be an anaphrodesiac, hence the name.

*Mango (Mangifera indica)* This Asian fruit is tremendously popular on St. Martin and worldwide. A number of different varieties are grown. Usually fruit are produced in the late spring and early summer.

*White Willow (Quadrella indica)* This native tree, and its close relative the Jamaican Caper, are well adapted to the dry climate and can survive in sunny coastal areas.







*Rat Apple (Morisonia americana)*  
Also known as *Dog Sapodilla*, *Jumbie Sapodilla* and *Wild Mesple*, this native tree produces a fruit that looks like a *sapodilla*, but does not taste good.



*Barberrry (Erythroxylum brevipes)*  
This tree is a native plant from the *coca* family that produces small, oblong berries.



*Clammy Cherry (Cordia obliqua)*  
Also known as *Sticky Cherry* and *White Manjack*, this non-native tree bears small fruit with very sticky juice that is sometimes used as *glue*.

*Five Fingers (Randia aculeata)*  
Also called *White Indigo Berry*, *Ink Berry*, *Fishing Rod* and *Christmas Tree*. Its berries are used as a *dye*, and it was used as a *Christmas tree*, staying green for weeks when cut.

*Kinip (Melicoccus bijugatus)* Selling these fruits on the roadside was a first business for many kids growing up on *St. Martin*. This South American tree is also known as *Spanish Lime*, *Quenette*, *Genip*, *Chenet* and many other names. Each tree is usually male or female, but some can be both. Below, the female flower is seen on the left and the male flower on the right.





## Shrubs

The St. Martin landscape is covered in shrubs, also known as bushes. In coastal areas, shrubs can often grow where tall trees can't handle the strong wind. In areas that were once farms or pastures, shrubs gradually take over grassy areas. On roadsides, shrubs grow up quickly and get cut down. Shrubs are used in landscaping because their size can be managed.

Because they don't grow tall like trees, shrubs are often dense so they can capture as much light as possible to grow. This can also help them conserve water during the dry season. While grasses and smaller plants may die during the dry season each year, shrubs may drop their leaves to save water and then regrow them when rains return.

*Above: Yellow Sage (left) and Bottle Brush (right).*





*Cotton (Gossypium hirsutum)*  
There are several species of cotton, including kinds that are native to St. Martin. It has been grown for export on the island at various times in history.



*West Indian Indigo (Indigofera suffruticosa)* This low-growing native shrub was cultivated to produce blue dye. Today it is often seen on roadsides.



*Castor Bean (Ricinus communis)*  
This African plant has been grown for its beans for millenia. Castor beans have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs. The beans are used to make castor oil.

*Yellow Sage (Lantana camara)* Yellow Sage is the national flower of the country Sint Maarten. This plant has been used in many ways. Its leaves are used as tea and ripe fruits may be eaten (though unripe fruits may be toxic). The roots, flowers and essential oil of this shrub are used medicinally.

*Lantana (Lantana camara)* The same species as Yellow Sage, this plant is also called Wild Sage and West Indian Lantana.





*Wild Tea (Capraria biflora)* Also called Goatweed, this native plant is used in traditional medicine, often as a tea. It grows well in dry places.



*Sweet Sage (Lippia alba)* With a sweet and lemony scent, this plant is a bush tea favorite. The essential oil of this plant features many aromatic compounds, and the exact mix varies from plant to plant.



*Bitter Berry (Solanum bahamense)* Commonly called Canker Berry, Gut Apple or Bahama Nightshade, this plant is used to treat sore throat and thrush.

*Candlebush (Senna alata)* Also known as King of the Forest and Christmas Candle, this plant is often used to treat skin conditions and contains antifungal compounds.

*Monkey Tamarind (Senna bicapsularis)* Also known as Black Dog Bush and Money Bush, this plant is used similarly to Candlebush. The flesh of its seed pods can be eaten as well.

*Pigeon Pea (Cajanus cajan)* Originally from Asia and brought to the Caribbean from Africa, the Pigeon Pea is a popular crop. It can have yellow or red flowers.







*Bread 'n Cheese (Pithecellobium unguis-cati)* This thorny bush is also known as Cat's Claw. A native plant, it grows well in dry areas.



*Milk Tree (Rauvolfia viridis)* This native bush is also known as Milkbush, Sassafras and Bellyache Bush.



*Wild Guava (Samyda dodecandra)* Several different plants are called Wild Guava. This species is not closely related to guava.

*Wooly Booger (Corchorus hirsutus)* This native plant is usually found in dry coastal areas. In some places it is used to treat cold and flu. Also known as Jack Switch.



*Bottle Brush (Cynophalla flexuosa)* Also known as Limber Caper and Bayleaf Caper Tree, this bush can sprawl like a vine. It has beautiful flowers with very long stamens.



*Tropical Black Sage (Varronia curassavica)* Leaves of this plant have been used in a variety of antifungal and anti-inflammatory preparations.





*Goat bush (Volkameria aculeata)*  
Also known as *Prayer Berry* and *Privy Hedge*, this native plant is sometimes grown as a hedge.



*Bellyache Bush (Jatropha gossypifolia)* This native bush is also known as *Physic Nut*. It grows wild in pastures and other open areas. It has been used to treat a wide variety of conditions.



*Teabush (Melochia tomentosa)* This native bush is also known as *Balsam*, *Pyramid Bush* and *Black Widow*. It is often found in dry, sunny areas.

*Beach Lavender (Tournefortia gnaphalodes)* This fragrant native bush is usually found in coastal areas. It is also known as *Sea Purslane*.



*Oleander di Bonaire (Plumeria pudica)* This variety of oleander may have been brought from Bonaire. It is native to Central and South America and grown as an ornamental plant on St. Martin.



*Devil Weed (Chromolaena odorata)*  
Also known as *Baby Bush* and *Christmas Bush*, this plant is popular with butterflies because it produces many flowers.







*Pride of Barbados (Caesalpinia pulcherrima)* Usually considered an exotic plant in the West Indies, it is widely grown ornamentally for its beautiful flowers. It has many other names, including Little Flamboyant, Spanish Carnation, Flower Pride and Peacock Flower. During the colonial era, this plant was used by enslaved Amerindians and Africans to induce abortion to avoid bringing children into enslavement.

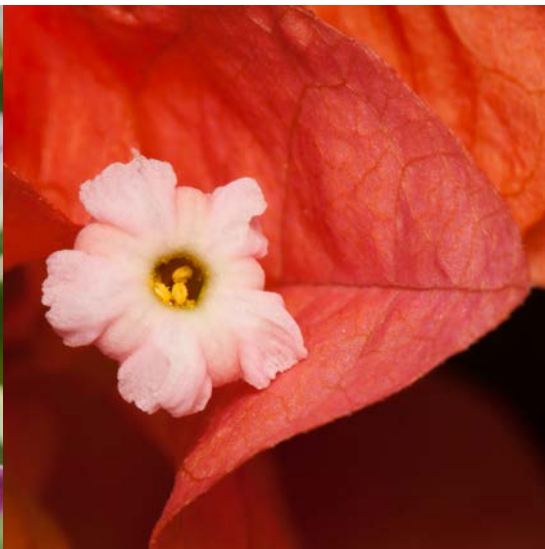


*Lady's Slipper (Euphorbia tithymaloides)* Also known as Redbird Flower and Slipper Spurge, this non-native plant is grown ornamentally on St. Martin.

*Apple of Sodom (Calotropis procera)*  
This non-native plant is from the milkweed family and is a host plant for the Monarch butterfly caterpillar.



*Bougainvillea (Bougainvillea glabra)* Also known as Paperflower, this South American plant is widely grown for its colorful flowers.





## Herbs

In cooking, we use herbs to flavor foods. But when we are grouping plants by shape and size, we use the word *herb* for all the smaller plants around us. Herbs are smaller than a bush or tree and don't get woody. Many of them are annual plants: they grow from seed and die within a year. In colder areas, these plants grow in the spring and summer, then die in the winter. On St. Martin, many of them grow during the rainy season and die out during the dry spring.

Herbs have all kinds of uses. Many are edible. Some herbs are grown simply for their beautiful flowers. Others are used in medicinal traditions that go back thousands of years. On St. Martin, bush teas are made from a variety of plants, including herbs. People drink them for general health and to treat special conditions.

*Above: Yellow Rain Lily (left) and Chinese Lantern (right).*





*Vervain (Stachytarpheta jamaicensis)* Also known as *Blue Flower*, this native plant is used to treat high blood pressure, colds and a variety of other conditions.



*Stinging Thyme (Plectranthus amboinicus)* Also known as *Big Leaf Thyme* and *Jumbie Sticky Thyme*, this African plant is a popular herb for seasoning fish and other foods.



*Tulsi (Ocimum tenuiflorum)* Also known as *Holy Basil*, this relative of basil is used as a tea, and a medicine. It is also part of some Hindu religious traditions.

*Seed Under the Leaf (Phyllanthus amarus)* The flowers and seeds of this native plant appear under its leaves. It is used to treat cough, fever and other maladies.

*Shining Bush (Peperomia pellucida)* This low-growing plant is also known as *Rat Ears* and *Watercress*. It can be eaten as salad, and it is used medicinally for eye infection and other conditions.

*Basil (Ocimum basilicum)* Basil is used worldwide as a spice. In the Caribbean it is also used in bush tea.





*Yellow Rain Lily (Zephyranthes citrina)* Native to Mexico, this small flower often sprouts and blooms when the first rains arrive after the spring dry season.



*Peppermint Lily (Crinum zeylanicum)* These non-native lilies are grown as ornamentals.



*Man Better Man (Achyranthes aspera)* Also called Devil's Horse Whip, the seeds of this plant stick to legs and clothing. It is not native to the Caribbean.

*Indian Nettle (Acalypha indica)*  
This non-native plant grows quickly in open areas. The roots affect cats similarly to catnip.

*Jumbie Basil (Rivina humilis)* This native plant is also known as Blood Berry and Cat's Blood. It has bright red berries which are sometimes used as a dye.

*Woodland False Buttonweed (Spermacoce remota)* This native plant tends to be found in open areas and roadsides.







*Waterleaf (Talinum fruticosum)* This native plant is also known as *Florida Spinach*, *Suriname Purslane*, *Potherb Fameflower* and *Sweetheart*. The leaves are edible and high in vitamins A and C. However, it is also high in oxalic acid, so it should be avoided by some people. The flowers may be pink, peach or yellow.

*Chinese Violet (Asystasia gangetica)* This non-native plant is grown as an ornamental ground cover. It flowers in a variety of colors. The large flowers are popular with carpenter bees and other insects.

*Chinese Lantern (Physalis angulata)* Also called *Cutleaf Ground Cherry*, this plant has edible fruit inside a poisonous paper-like covering.





*Tickweed (Arivela viscosa)* This non-native plant is also known as Asian Spider Flower.



*False Mallow (Malvastrum sp.)* Probably one of several similar-looking native species.



*Indian Mallow (Pseudabutilon umbellatum)* A native plant found in open areas.

*Caribbean Caltrop (Kallstroemia pubescens)* A native plant sometimes called False Purslane.



*Big Caltrop (Kallstroemia maxima)* Another native caltrop.



*Purslane (Portulaca oleracea)* This native plant grows wild on St. Martin and can be eaten as a salad.







*Mauve (Melochia pyramidata)* A native plant also known as Smooth Melochia and Pyramid Flower.



*Bell Weed (Ruellia prostrata)* Native to Africa and Asia, this plant grows low to the ground and has light purple flowers.



*Tobacco (Nicotiana tabacum)* Introduced to the Caribbean, tobacco was the first major cash crop on St. Martin. The plant still grows wild on the island today.

*Twelve O'Clock Weed (Sida ciliaris)* This native plant is also known as Bracted Sida.



*White Jingle Weed (Sida abutilifolia)* This native plant is also known as Creeping Sida.



*Spanish Needle (Bidens alba var. radiata)* Also called Butterfly Needles, this native plant produces lots of nectar for insects.





*Periwinkle (Catharanthus roseus)*  
Also known as *Old Maid* and *Bright Eyes*, this plant is from *Madagascar*, but is grown for its flowers in gardens around the world.



*Hogweed (Boerhavia coccinea)* This native plant is also known as *Scarlet Spiderling*. It spreads quickly across bare ground.



*Little Ironweed (Cyanthillium cinereum)* This non-native plant has been used to treat many things, from fever to scorpion stings.

*Phasey Bean (Macroptilium lathyroides)* This wild native bean is edible.

*Rattlepod (Crotalaria sp.)* There are many varieties of *Crotalaria*, and most come from *Africa*. Some species are edible and others are poisonous.

*Caribbean Stylo (Stylosanthes hamata)* This non-native plant is also known as *Cheesy Toes*, *Sweet Weed* and *Pencil Flower*.







*Hog Purslane (Trianthema portulacastrum)* This native plant looks similar to Purslane. It is sometimes eaten or used for medicinal purposes.



*Old Lady Coat Tail (Priva lappalulacea)* This native plant is used to treat sores and sore throat.



*Doctorbush (Plumbago zeylanica)* This non-native plant is also known as Leadwort and it has been used medicinally in many ways.

*Guinea Henweed (Petiveria alliacea)*  
A native plant also known as Conga Root and Garlic Weed.

*Baby's Breath Euphorbia (Euphorbia hypericifolia)* This native plant is reputed to have medicinal properties. It is sometimes called Chik Weed and used to treat Chikungungya.

*Scorpion Tail (Heliotropium angiospermum)* A native plant also known as Dog's Tail, Rooster Comb and Bright Eye Bush. Used for pink eye, sores, itches and stings.







This book was developed as a companion to Amuseum Naturalis, St. Martin's free museum of nature, heritage and culture. The Amuseum, and this book, were created by Les Fruits de Mer.

Les Fruits de Mer is a non-profit association based in St. Martin whose core mission is to raise awareness about nature, culture, and heritage. The organization carries out this mission through a free museum, publications, films, and public events. Learn more at [lesfruitsdemer.com](http://lesfruitsdemer.com) and [amuseumnaturalis.com](http://amuseumnaturalis.com).

