

Magic flower-of-the-Incas (*Cantua buxifolia*) is the national flower of Peru.



[Click here for a list of Peru plants.](#)

Cantua flowers are threaded on strings as a welcome.



You can see the shape of the *Cantua* flower in several places in Peru including their hat designs.



We visited the medicinal botanic garden in Lima and the curator acted as our guide.



Native cotton (*Gossypium barbadense*)



We had an extended discussion of this innocent looking vine called Ayahuasca (*Banisteriopsis caapi*) "the vine of the soul". It is used by the Shamans to bring people to an altered state where they often have epiphany-like revelations.



The garden had crab's eyes or rosary pea (*Arbrus*) a plant in the legume family that produces a seed considered to contain one of the deadliest poisons.



Arbrus precatorius



So naturally, we saw it
in all kinds of jewelry.



In the garden, we also saw the sandlebox tree (*Hura crepitans*) in flower. We have encountered hura several other times in our hortclub travels. It produces an exploding fruit, which disperses seeds over 100 feet at a speed of 150 miles per hour. It was also used by the Bri Bri in Costa Rica as an ornament for necklaces.



The giant sensitive plant (*Mimosa pigra*) has leaflets that fold when touched and the seed pods have an interesting way of opening to shed seeds. It is native to Peru, but elsewhere in the world it is considered one of the worst invasive woody plants.



The Peruvian pepper tree (*Schinus molle*) produces pink peppercorns with a similar taste and use as black pepper (*Piper nigrum*). It was common throughout the Sacred Valley. It has also become a significant exotic invasive plant in Australia, California and Florida.



Peru is the land of the potato and many other members of the potato family (Solanaceae) can be seen including (*Solanum sessile*).



Blue potato bush (*Lycianthes rantonnetii*)



Apple-of-Peru (*Nicandra physalodes*)



Angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia*)
grows to tremendous size in Peru.



There was a great diversity of flowering plants on our hike at Machu Picchu.



Vochysia



There was a tremendous number of bromeliads (*Tillandsia*) clinging as epiphytes to the face of a mountain near the Inca bridge.



Bromeliads and lichens cling to a tree.



Various *Peperomia* species was another epiphyte seen on trees and branches.



There were numerous types of begonias that could also be seen growing as epiphytes.



The Andes are the center of origin for pocketbook plants (*Calceolaria*) and there is a great diversity in flowering with over 300 species.



There were also several types of *Fuchsia*.



I have a new appreciation for the diversity in *Oxalis* species from Peru. Several times we ate oca (*Oxalis tuberosa*) and then we found the giant wood sorrel (*Oxalis sanmiguelii* ssp. *urubambensis*) at Machu Picchu.



There are a number of wonderful orchids at Machu Picchu.



Sobralia dichotoma is a tall terrestrial orchid.



Epidendrum secundum was at home in the cloud forest.



Stelis is a small orchid.



Cranichis is a terrestrial orchid.



Justicia alpina looked like a small ground orchid.



Agalinis and *Castilleja* are both hemiparasites that have green leaves, but also parasitize plant roots (usually grasses) for additional resources.



Agalinis lanceolata



Castilleja pumila

There are over 50 *Brachyotum* species that occur in the Andes.



Vallea stipularis is another showy woody plant native to the Andes.



Oreocallis grandiflora is the only member of this genus in the Protea family.



Other plants encountered in the Andes around Lake Titicaca included several members of the Loasaceae.



Loasa grandiflora

This pretty little *Caiophora* in the Loasaceae has nasty stinging trichomes on their leaves and petals.



Monnina aestuans is in the Polygala family.



Siphocampylus krauseanus
is in the Campanula family.



Ageratum sp.



Passion fruit (*Passiflora*) was trellised along buildings for their flowers and edible fruit.



There were several types of lupine observed including *Lupinus mutilis* that is also grown as a crop.



One of the native tobacco species
Nicotiana tomentosa.



These large trees in Cusco are *Polylepis rugulosa*. *Polylepis* are in the rose family and native to the Andes. They are considered to be the angiosperm tree that grows at highest elevation.



Polylepis rugulosa is recognizable
for its red peeling bark.

