

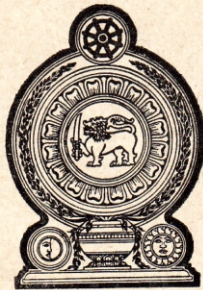
SRI LANKA

Stamp

Bulletin No. 45

Definitive Issue

SRI LANKA FLOWERS



1976. 01. 01

Philatelic Bureau
Posts & Telecommunications
Department
Sri Lanka

The Ministry of Posts and
Telecommunications,

Duke Street,
Colombo 1,
Sri Lanka (Ceylon),

76. 01. 01.

THE Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications will issue a set of stamps depicting flowers on 76. 01. 01.

Sri Lanka, because of its geographical position and its topographic features, exhibits a marked diversity of habitat conditions and a correspondingly rich and varied flora. The central highlands are covered by a montane flora with an almost unparalleled profusion of colours. Here we have many species with Himalayan and North Temperate affinities. The South-Western region has tropical rain forests closely related to those of Malaysia. The major part of the Northern and the Eastern plains has seasonally dry forests characteristic of the monsoon lands of Asia and on the extreme North-West and the South-East are dry and semi-desert lands covered by thorn scrub.

This flora has been the subject of study of many distinguished scientists including the Swedish Botanist Linneus, the "Father of Botany" himself. Linneus' "Flora Zeylanica" was first published in 1747, and in fact ours is one of the earliest tropical floras to have been studied scientifically.

The feature of greatest interest in our flora is the high proportion of endemics. Out of a total flora of nearly 3,000 native species nearly a third is endemic to the island, i.e. they are found growing naturally only in Sri Lanka and not in any other

country. Some of these have very handsome and attractive flowers and are now grown as ornamentals in various countries. Four of these wild flowers are depicted in this series of stamps.

Rhododendron zeylanicum—(Ma-ratmal)

This is a common plant in the hill country at elevations over 5,000 ft. It is very variable in form and size and may occur as isolated trees in the grasslands or grow gregariously in forests. It has a thick, rough, deeply furrowed bark and is very resistant to fires. In localities exposed to fires the trees may be stunted, gnarled and contorted and only a few feet in height. In favourable habitats, however, it may attain a height of 60 ft. Even specimens 4–5 ft. in height may flower profusely. The flowers are dark crimson in colour and flowering occurs from February to about July. This species is much used in horticulture for breeding purposes because of its vigorous and free flowering habit.

“Rhododendron” means “Rose tree” (Greek—rhodon=rose, and dendron=tree). The Arab traveller Ibn Batuta who was in Ceylon in 1343–44 A. D. records its presence on the summit of Adam’s Peak “....there are many evergreen trees and flowers of various colours, including a red rose as big as the palm of a hand

Ipea speciosa—(Daffodil Orchid)

There are over 150 species of native orchids in the island and of them about half are endemic. Most endemic orchids are rare plants with very restricted distributions. The Daffodil orchid is an exception. It is locally abundant in some montane grasslands especially near Ambawela and Bopatalawa. It

has also been recorded from lower elevations near Hantane and Teldeniya.

The plant produces only one or two leaves at a time and when not in flower remains hidden among the grasses. The leaves are long and narrow and arise from a tuberous underground stem. The leaves disappear before flowering, which is from about September onwards. The flower stalk is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long and is bare except for a few loose, whitish, sheaths. The flowers are yellow in colour and hang down, resembling in their natural surroundings, the wild English daffodils. Hence the popular name "daffodil orchid".

Exacum trinerve—(*Binara, Ginihiriya*)

This is one of our most beautiful native flowers. It is a common plant on moist soil in the wetter parts of Sri Lanka. The stem is stout and quadrangular and is about $1-2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in height. The leaves are ovate to narrowly lanceolate and taper towards both base and apex. Each has three prominent main veins—hence the specific epithet trinerve. The flowers are $1\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, brilliant blue in colour and are produced in clusters in large numbers.

The plant is used locally in medicine. A bitter tonic made from it is given in mild fevers. According to Trimen this is well known in England as a cultivated plant.

Wormia triquetra—(*Diyapara*)

Diyapara is a rather rare, moderately sized tree growing in damp soil or near waterways in the moist low country upto an elevation of about 3,000 ft. It has smooth brown twigs marked with prominent leaf scars. The leaves are large and

oblong-oval in shape and have toothed margins. The terminal bud of each shoot is enclosed in a sheath which is fused to the upper side of the leaf stalk along its full length. When a new leaf expands the sheath splits open, shrivels and falls off.

The flowers are large and white in colour. Each has numerous stamens. The fruit is small and nearly globular and remains loosely enclosed in persistent sepals.

“Wormia” is mainly a Malaysian genus, and except for *W. triquetra*—(Diyapara) all other species are confined to that region.

(By Courtesy of the Botany Department,
Colombo Campus, University of Sri Lanka).

Technical Details

<i>Denominations</i>	.. 25 cts., 50 cts., 75 cts. and Rs. 10/-.
<i>Designs</i>	.. Based on photographs.
<i>Colours</i>	.. Black, Cyan, Magenta and Yellow.
<i>Format</i>	.. Vertical.
<i>Date of Issue</i>	.. 1976.01.01.
<i>Size</i>	.. 37 mm. × 32 mm.
<i>Printers</i>	.. Toppan Printing Co., Ltd., Japan.
<i>Printing Process</i>	.. Offset.
<i>Sheet composition</i>	.. 100 stamps per sheet.
<i>Paper</i>	.. One side coated paper suitable for postage stamps 104.7 g/m ² .
<i>Gum</i>	.. Special adhesive suitable for tropical climate.

Official First Day Covers

The Philatelic Bureau will provide a specially designed first day cover and a special postmark.

Terms of Sale

Overseas orders for the supply of the new stamps and first day covers should be addressed with full particulars to the Director, Philatelic Bureau, 4th Floor, Ceylinco House, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and should be accompanied by Mail Transfer, International Money Order or Bank Draft payable to the Director, Philatelic Bureau.

