ARISTOCRAT IN THE GARDEN: ANTHURIUM

A

anthurium is another flower that is renowned for its beauty. It is also an aristocrat and needs a specialized medium to grow. Common soil is not for Anthurium. ‘Garden Talk’ features this
choosy plant.

“Anthuriums are popular and grown in Asiatic and European countries. They are widely grown in Japan, Netherlands, Thailand and Sri Lanka. In these countries, Anthuriums are a big business. Anthuriums come in many varieties. In Sri Lanka, there are local and imported Anthuriums which are brought here and grown. We in Sri Lanka also export Anthuriums,” said District Agricultural Instructor of the District Agriculture office Katunayake, K. N. K, Jayathilake.

Anthurium is a commercial flower which has a variety of colours and attractive shapes. It is immediately recog-

nized by its signature - the ‘horn’ - that appears in the
middle. This butterfly shape can give a house a unique look.

“Anthuriums are grown for various purposes such as cut
flower and potted plants. In Sri Lanka, local varieties of
Anthuriums are mainly grown for the purposes of cut
flowers - cut and sold for commercial purposes - and also
grown for beauty or ornamental purpose. Ornamental
Anthuriums are small and flowers are not harvested. For-
eign varieties are mainly used as flowering plants in plastic pots.

When carrying it out as a business, they can be sold as cut flowers. In addition, we can sell large
plants with flowers or we can sell small flowerless plants.

“Anthurium come in various colours. Because of
cross pollinations, you get many colours. Red, white,
and orange Anthuriums are grown widely. In addition,
there are bi-colours and mixtures. There are even green and pink coloured Anthuriums. Sale

depends on the preference of the buyer,” pointed out Jay-
athilake.

The stock visits the Anthurium in two ways - Sexual
and Asexual - making it one of the most versatile plants
you can find.

Anthuriums can be propagated in two ways - Sexual
and Asexual. Sexual means you get seeds and from seeds
you get plants - that is Sexual propagation. Asexual
means when you grow an Anthurium plant, a lot of shoot
come in. So you can remove the shoots and have separate
plants.

The advantage of cross pollinations is that you can have a
wide assortment of colours. When it comes to cross pol-


dination in Anthuriums, it can happen naturally but that is
very rare. So when it comes to Anthuriums artificially you
have to do cross pollination. So you take pollen from the
flower of one plant and it is pasted on the female part of
the other flower.

Anthuriums take about two years to blossom when
planted as seedlings. But if it is a vegetative propagate-
dated plant, then that will take around one year to
blossom. Vegetative propagated plant is any method apart from seed propagation, such as using shoots,” explained
Jayathilake.

Like the rose, the Anthurium performs differently in
various regions of the country. These flowers compete
with each other in their various zones making Sri Lanka
one of the most colourful countries.

“Anthuriums that can be grown in the rest of the world
can also be grown in Sri Lanka. The ideal areas to grow Anthuri-

ums are the mid country and low country. In the low
country, you can grow good Anthuriums. Mainly
mid country wet zones and low country wet zones are ideal. There are also good Anthuriums in the intermediate
zone such as the Kandawalana district. In addition Kandy,
Matale, Walawwa, Hatton, Ginigathena, Thalawakele are
elegant places to grow Anthuriums. However, in
Munuwewala Anthuriums do not perform well,” stated
Jayathilake.

Anthurium is truly an aristocrat. It needs a special type
of medium to grow in. It is a plant that needs the ‘special
treatment’. It needs a certain amount of air and it is hardy
and can undergo a certain amount of stress.

Anthuriums cannot be grown in normal soil. The
medium is artificial - they are grown on Coir Husk, brick
pieces and charcoal pieces. But there are some people
who are trying to grow it in soil. But unfortunately it does
not perform well in that medium.

“Anthuriums perform well in shade. Although, if it is
exposed to too much sunlight, the plants get burnt. How-
ever, when you have too much of shade, then again, it
does not perform well. Any extreme variation and the
flower will not be very attractive. Anthuriums can be cul-
tivated all 365 days of the year. However, when it is not
raising you need to irrigate - supply water,” said
Jayathilake.

Every plant has its enemies. And for every enemy you have
a solution. For every enemy in the plant kingdom,
there is a plan of warfare.

“Diseases such as insect mites (flowers and leaves) and
blight (bacterial disease can affect an Anthurium plant.
Once you see the symptoms, remove the plant from that
area when it comes to blight. To combat mites, apply
water soluble Sulphur and insecticide which contains
Sulphur.

A monthly mixture of compost-NPK mixture (Nitro-
gen, Phosphorus and Potassium) and a fertilizer in
granular form and liquid fertilizer,” explained Jayathilake.

TIPS ON HOW TO GROW ANTHURIUMS

- Anthuriums need a shade of 70 percent
- We do not use soil. The medium we use is Coir Husk
- The temperature must be 25 – 30 Celsius
- Every year Anthuriums need 80 percent of rainfall
- Humidity needs to be 70 – 80 percent
- If you are growing in pots from the ground level it has to be placed at a height of 1½ - 2 feet
- Proper fertilizer is very important
- There is a fertilizer that is specially applicable to Anthuriums - K40 or K45
- When it gets disease you must control it immediately or the plant will die. It begins with the leaves. As soon
as you see an affected leaf you have to remove it and destroy it.
- The shade is very important, so you can use a shade net.
- It can also be grown under mango or rambutan trees. But this contributes to disease and that is the one
drawback