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Maladora Blooms

By Sophie Braccini



Mayumi Webber and Maladora Photo provided

Odoardo on July 18th; while Titania bloomed for only a few hours on August 7th, 2007. For more information go to <http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu>.

The U.C. Berkeley Botanical Garden houses a multitude of treasures, including Maladora, an *Amorphophallus titanum*, more commonly known as a titan arum or "corpse flower." The titan arum blooms only for a day or two once every few years; it took 15 years for Maladora to bear its first bloom. To celebrate the giant flower, which appeared late last month, the garden organized a naming competition that was won by Lafayette resident Mayumi Webber.

"Adorable but bad, malodiferous and adorable, the name Maladora personifies the titan arum. Congratulations to Mayumi," said Botanical Garden Director Dr. Paul Licht. The massive flower-like structure is an inflorescence of hundreds of female flowers at the bottom and, immediately above, thousands of male, pollen producing flowers that resemble short white threads. The bloom produces a foul odor reminiscent of rotting flesh to attract pollinators.

Webber says she discovered the Botanical Garden during a visit organized by the Lafayette Garden Club a couple of years ago. She registered to receive the Garden's electronic newsletter, in which she read about the flower. "I had read about the giant arum a few years back when another one flowered in the United States," she said, "It is quite fascinating and the name came naturally to me as a blend of malodorous and adorable."

Maladora was grown from a seed collected in Sumatra in 1995. Webber reports that when the flower opened on June 30th the smell was not that bad; it reminded her of the smell of a butcher shop. Still, the magnificent beauty of the flower impressed her. "The Garden sells those flowers, but they have to be grown inside," says Webber.

According to the Botanical Garden, only a handful of titan arums bloom each year in the United States, providing a few fortunate visitors the opportunity to witness an extraordinary botanical phenomenon. The Garden generally sees one titan bloom each summer. Trudy bloomed on the 4th of July, 2009; 2008 was a banner year, witnessing the blooms of Odoardo on June 30th and

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