

POTHOS AUREA, Hort. Linden

by

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This is an aroid with a long history. In 1880 it was published for the first time under the name given above in *L'illustration Horticole* Vol. 27 p. 69 Pl. CCCLXXXI. This monthly horticultural review was published at Gand in Belgium under the editorial responsibility of Ed (ouard) Andre, while J (ean) Linden, the horticulturist who owned a commercial garden in the city, was its manager and publisher. The descriptive notes are signed by Andre, although the selection of the material and the accompanying coloured plate might have been made under the direction of Linden. But since the plant was first named in Linden's garden and only later the name published botanically by Andre, many botanists attributed the authorship of the name jointly to Linden and Andre; however, under the modern rules of botanical nomenclature, the credit of the authorship should be given to Andre only, for it is obvious from the publication that Andre alone was responsible for associating the name with its description that is permissible under the rules for giving the name a botanical status. Yet the fact that the name was first adopted in the garden by Linden might be indicated by citing the authorship as "Linden *ex* Andre", not as "Linden *et* Andre" which is used to indicate a joint authorship. The plant was stated to have been introduced in Linden's garden in 1879 from the Solomon islands in the South Pacific.

The aroid forms a very attractive, decorative plant because of its large golden yellow blotches produced on its leaves when the plant is grown in situations exposed to light. It grows luxuriantly as an epiphyte on a variety of conditions, making little demand on water and care, for it will grow as a creeper on rocks, trellis work, on walls and even as a miniature plant indoors and on mantle pieces when placed in small decoration vases containing little water. Further it is easily multiplied from cuttings. All these qualities have helped to make the species spread widely in cultivation to almost all parts of the world. However botanically the species has been insufficiently known, for despite its long history and wide distribution in cultivation, its flowers have not been described, though botanists have been keeping a watchful eye on

the plants in several botanical gardens of the world. Judging from its vegetative characters alone A. Engler, who specialized in the Aroids and had opportunities to examine herbaria and living botanical collections in many parts of the world, thought the species should be placed in the genus *Scindapsus* and accordingly he made the transfer of the specific epithet to produce the binomial *Scindapsus aureus* (Linden et Andre) Engler in *Pflanzenreich* Heft 37, 1908, p. 80, though, as said above, it is correct to use *ex* after Linden in place of *et*, or omit the name of Linden altogether. Some are of the opinion that it is an *Epipremnum* species, but according to Bunting (*Baileya* 10: 29, 1962) there is little evidence to justify its transfer to that genus.

In Malaya, too, the plant has been long in cultivation and before the World War II the public utilized it mostly for indoor decoration. But in places like the Botanic Gardens, Singapore, the plant was grown in different positions for the purpose of studying its behaviour and to see whether it would produce any flowers and fruit. According to the notes made by me in June 1928, the plant which climbs and produces very small leaves indoors when placed in small phials containing water, grow into a large plant when planted in the ground outdoors and allowed to climb on trees or on any vertical objects. If grown in situations exposed to sunlight the large leaves retain their yellow markings which vary from yellowish white to orange yellow and yellowish green. If grown in shade, the yellow markings tend to disappear and the plant may produce leaves that are completely green. When grown on short posts or plants, it sends down from the top long pendent stolons which, on reaching the ground, root and trail until they find suitable supports for growing vertically upwards. The trailing stem is very slender and produces very small leaves which are entire and heart-shaped. Later on, when it finds a vertical object to climb up, the stem and the leaves increase in size so that the plant may finally produce huge leaves about 15–20 inches or more long and about 15 inches in width, with a petiole about 12 inches long. The larger leaves are frequently divided into irregular lateral divisions which go deep, about the quarter of the breadth of the leaf-blade. In structure of the leaf this plant seems to be a very close ally of *Epipremnum pinnatum* (L) Engler, a plant also cultivated in the Botanic Gardens, Singapore, and widely distributed in nature throughout Indo-Malaysia from South West Burma to New Guinea, occurring also in Indochina and South China and the monsoon regions of north-east Australia.

However *Pothos aurea* seems to have been never collected again in the wild state, so that all the progeny now spread throughout the world might have derived from the juvenile state originally grown in Linden's garden in Gand. During the recent years many Malaysians who now have their own houses with very little vegetation growing around, have started planting this aroid in the open in their compounds or growing in large pots with erect supports. It has come to be known as the 'Money Plant' apparently on the superstitious belief that the person who finds his plant in flower would quickly acquire wealth. One such plant, grown by Mrs. R. R. Sarathee in a kerosene tin in the verandah of her flat on the third floor of a building in Singapore, was fortunate enough to produce flowers, in September 1961, though its owner is yet far from being a wealthy person. And it is through her kindness in allowing me to take a leaf and a spadix from the plant that this note has been possible. The plant had produced three spadices in all, but the other two which were kept on the plant, failed to attain maturity and went bad. Apparently the plant flowered again in December 1961, but I was not able to obtain any specimen.

An analysis of the spadix confirms that the plant is indeed very near to *Epipremnum pinnatum*. However I agree with Mr. D. H. Nicolson of Bailey's Hortorium, Ithaca University, U.S.A., who worked for some time in Singapore and who in his manuscript key sinks the genus *Epipremnum* to unite it with *Raphidophora*, for the distinction between these two is not very marked. Hence when the specific epithet is instated in the latter genus, the new combination *Raphidophora aurea* (Linden ex Andre) comb. nov. is obtained. Bunting (op. cit: 25-29, 1962) argues in favour of retaining *Epipremnum* distinct from *Raphidophora*. The botanical details are given below and in the accompanying figure:

Raphidophora aurea (Linden ex Andre) Furtado **comb. nov.**
Fig. 1.

Pothos aurea Linden ex Andre in *Ill. Hort.* 27 (1880) 69 pl. 381: **basionym** *Scindapsus aureus* (Linden ex Andre) Engl. in *Pflanzenr.* 37 (1908) 80: **isonym** ***Pedunculus validus***, circa 6 cm. longus, 10-15 cm. mm. crassus. **Spatha** crassa, carnosa, albescens, cymbiformis, breviter acuminate, circa 15 cm. longa, 6-7 cm. lata. **Spadix** sessilis, quam a patha paulo longior, cylindricus, apice obtusus, 17-19 cm. longus, 2-3 cm. crassus. **Stamina** 4; filamenta lato linearia, ovario paulo longiora, infra antheras ovaes biloculares valde angustata. **Ovarium** hexagonale, biloculare, vertice truncatum, stigmatum lineari coronatum; ovula prope basin sita. **Bacca** ignota.

MALAYA: Singapore, (Furtado: 28-ix-1961—SING).

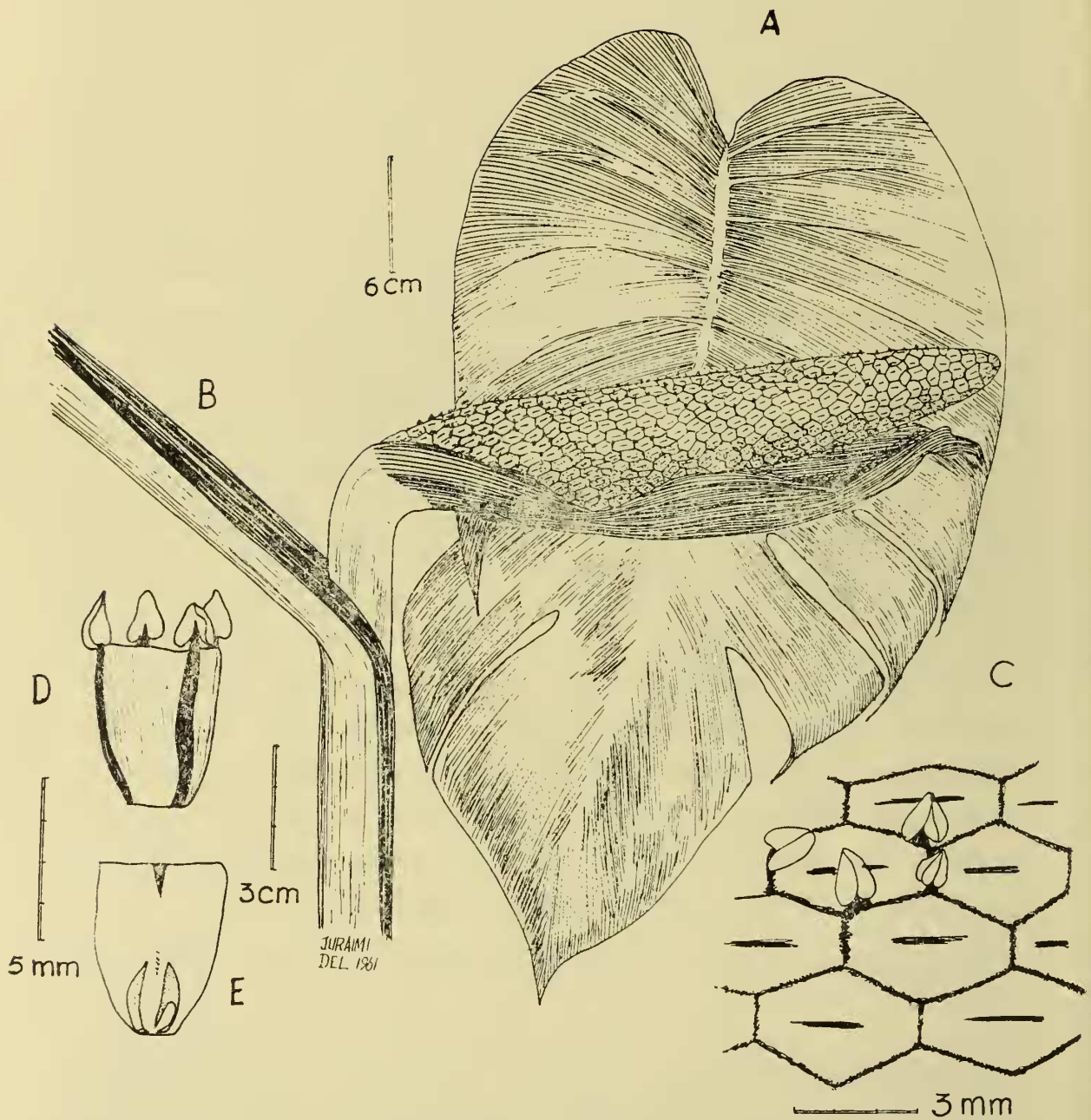


Fig. 1. A. Folium. B. Inflorescentia cum spatha pedunculoque. C. Spadicis pars ut ovaria antheraeque apparent. D. Pistillum a latere visum. E. Pistillum verticalliter sectum.