

Plate 245 *Josephinia Imperatricis*

Pedalioides tribulus

Lizard Island, Australia 11 – 12 August 1770

In its natural habitat this plant usually grows as a trailing herb but can flower and fruit as a shrub 1 metre tall.

Joseph Banks' journal of the 11th and 12th August, 1770 records Endeavour's visit to an island in the Great Barrier reef,



'Great part of yesterday and all this morn till the boat returned I employed in searching the island. On it I found some few plants which I had not before seen, the island itself was small and barren, on it was however one small tract of woodland which abounded very much with large lizzards some of which we took...'

This was Lizard Island off the NE coast of Australia from which a specimen of *Josephinia imperatricis* was taken along with other flora and fauna.

Daniel Solander recognised the plant's relationship to *pedalium* (pedaliaceae) and gave it the name *pedalioides tribulus*. As was the protocol on board Endeavour, Banks, Solander and Parkinson would convene after such excursions to discuss what they had found and make detailed notes concerning the items prior to their safe-keeping and storage for the voyage back to England. In particular, Sydney Parkinson would have sketched the plant, probably in situ as well as adding detail arising from discussions and further studies of specimens, including notes added about the plant and a description of its colour. For example, Parkinson noted,

'... the petala on the inside delicate pale crimson the lower labia deep crimson at the edge...'

He would add colour references to indicate the appearance of leaf, flower, and fruit of the plant with detailed colour notes on the verso for his own and others' future reference. This meticulous process of recording and description ensured that a full appreciation of the plant was achieved and its natural habitat. This process was a collaborative effort that would be emulated further during the protracted and precarious journey this plant would experience on board ship.

It may not have escaped the reader's notice that the subject of Plate 245 appears to have two names, one seemingly unconnected to Cook's First Voyage under the auspices of the British Royal Navy. Indeed, a name that appears to celebrate the Empress of

France, an historic and continuing enemy of England at the time. This chapter in the journey of *Josephinia imperatricis* commences with the 1800-04 French Pacific Expedition commissioned by Napoleon Bonaparte. This expedition was led by Nicolas Baudin, Captain of the expedition ship, *Géographe*. He collected seeds of this (apparently unpleasantly) aromatic plant and had them taken back to France by Emmanuel Hamelin, Captain of the second expedition ship *Le Naturaliste*.

Empress Josephine was a keen collector of exotic plants from around the world. Following her marriage to Napoleon she propagated seeds in her garden on her estate at Malmaison. These plants were artistically recorded by Etienne Pierre Ventenat, an eminent French botanist, and published under the title *Jardin de la Malmaison in 1804*. The publication was regarded as a masterpiece of botanical illustration. The name Empress Josephine is '*Josephinia imperatrix*' in Latin. It was from this that Ventenat named the plant in honour of the Empress as creator of her garden and her patronage of French science. A portrait of Josephine by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon in the Louvre shows her seated next to an example of the plant *Josephinia imperatricis* that she had grown from seed.

The question arises concerning what has happened to the specimens brought back by Banks et al in 1771. The answer lies, in part, with a mixture of motives, egos, and the complexities involved in preparing descriptive text, artwork, and copperplate engravings for final printing and publication.

Pedalioides tribulus as the plant would have been known in 1771 in England was, along with everything else, in a state of limbo due to the fact that Banks had retained possession of the collection of specimens and remained in overall charge of what was called 'The Grand Project'. Banks was keen to be part of Cook's second voyage of exploration in 1772 but for various reasons withdrew. In 1773, work began in earnest on the Grand Project. This required teams of artists and engravers to be assembled. The extent of the project was such that in 1777 Banks had to move his vast collection of specimens to a larger and more centrally located house in Soho Square. Sydney Parkinson had died on the return voyage thus his work, complete or otherwise, would have to be carried on by others. This is where the quality of the original work undertaken en route by Banks, Solander and Parkinson as an integrated, collaborative scientific enterprise came into its own. In addition to Parkinson's 280 finished studies, a further 493 were subsequently completed. Engravers Daniel MacKenzie, Gabriel Smith and Gerard Sibelius, together engraved 564 copperplates. In 1782 Solander suffered a fatal stroke which added to further delays in the project.

Josephinia imperatricis was originally sketched and annotated by Parkinson in 1770, final artwork produced by F. P. Nodder in 1778, and engraved by G. Sibelius.

Robert Parkinson

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