

## ***CRINUM PEDUNCULATUM*: a dramatic addition to a garden**

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*Crinum pedunculatum* is a large, perennial, lily-like plant that grows naturally along streams and rivers and behind coastal beaches from the Northern Territory, through north east Queensland, and in New South Wales as far south as Broulee and Moruya in New South Wales. It is said that its distribution is limited by the warm south-flowing sea currents that terminate off the Eurobodalla coast.

Because it is common beside swamps, creeks and watercourses, its common name is Swamp Lily, or River Lily. These names imply that the plant requires 'wet feet', but this is not necessarily so. It grows equally well in soil under casuarina or eucalypt trees, in loamy or clayey soils, in full sun or in shade. It is one tough plant. So it will grow well in any garden, particularly a big one, where it looks great if planted, one or two, or even three together, well apart, so that each can spread to its full 2-3 metre width. The large leaves are burned by frost if there is no shelter, but the plant recovers well in the spring.

Originally, *C. pedunculatum* was placed in the Liliaceae family, but later research has put it in the Amaryllidaceae, a family where most of the members have bulbs. These include *Amaryllis*, *Narcissus*, *Hippeastrum*, and *Nerine*.

Like many of our Australian plants, it was named by Robert Brown in his 1810 publication of the flora of New South Wales, and, also like many others, the Type Specimen was collected from 'Port Jackson'. In the period since Robert Brown's publication, the Swamp Lily has gone through 13 name changes, the latest in 1994 when it was considered to be part of the *Crinum asiaticum* complex. Current thinking has it that *C. asiaticum* only occurs on Christmas and Cocos Islands, so it is now back to Robert Brown and *C. pedunculatum*.

The generic name, *Crinum* comes from the Greek *crinon*, meaning lily, while the specific name *pedunculatum* is from Latin *pedunculatus*, referring to the long flower stalk, or peduncle.

Generally, the seeds, that are round, fleshy and about 3-4cm in diameter, are dispersed by water, which accounts for the usual location of the lily by streams and estuaries. The seeds are described as being 'cotyledonary petiolate', that is, they produce a petiole for the first leaf before a root system is established.

Crushed material of *C. pedunculatum* has been used to treat stings of the



Box Jellyfish in Northern Australia, but it is by no means a cure. It was also once used to make fishing lures; the thick stem was retted, or soaked in water to remove all the contents, leaving behind a pale coloured fibrous material. This was attached to the fishing line around the hook, and supposedly attracted fish such as mackerel.

Quite an interesting plant.