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## stephanotis



*Marsdenia floribunda*  
Madagascar jasmine, Wax flower, Bridal wreath, Floradora  
Photo: Harster Greenhouses

### BOTANICAL NAME

*Marsdenia floribunda*  
(mars-DEN-ee-uh flor-ih-BUN-duh)

*Note: These plants were previously classified as Stephanotis (stef-an-NO-tis) floribunda, but the International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT) has reclassified them into the Marsdenia genus. In this article, however, we use the former genus name, Stephanotis, because it remains so commonly known and widely used by both florists and consumers.*

### COMMON NAME

Madagascar jasmine, Wax flower, Bridal wreath, Floradora

### DESCRIPTION

*Stephanotises* are tropical vining plants that are usual-

ly grown on trellises or wire forms. Blooms are tubular, with five-petaled star-shaped "faces"; have a waxy texture and an intense, sweet jasmnelike fragrance; and grow in clusters. Leaves are thick, oval, shiny, dark green and leathery/waxy.

### COLORS

*Stephanotis* blossoms are bright white but turn ivory or yellow as they mature.

### CONSUMER LIFE

*Stephanotis* plants can last for years. Bloom cycles typically range from six to eight weeks, and individual blooms generally last five to 10 days, depending on environmental conditions and care.

### AVAILABILITY

*Stephanotis* plants are available year-round.

### in-store and consumer care

**LIGHT** These plants require bright, well-lit environments, but protect them from exposure to direct sunlight.

**WATER** Keep soil evenly moist, watering with soft water. During the winter months, water more sparingly, keeping soil just barely moist. Never let pots sit in standing water.

**TEMPERATURE** *Stephanotises* prefer warm environments: 72 F or higher during the daytime and 65 F or higher at night. During winter months, these plants require cooler conditions, 55 F to 65 F. Protect them from sudden changes in temperature, and make sure there is good air circulation.

**HUMIDITY** *Stephanotis* plants do best in environments with medium to high humidity levels. Place the pots on pebble trays or mist the leaves with room-temperature soft water.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** *Stephanotises* can be affected by high levels of ethylene, so keep plants away from fruit and other produce, which can generate significant amounts of the harmful gas.

**FERTILIZER** Advise customers to feed plants with a balanced fertilizer every two to three weeks from about April through September or October. Do not fertilize plants during nonflowering (rest) periods and during winter months.

**GROOMING** Remove individual flowers as they fade and leaves if they turn yellow. Tie

new growth to the trellis or wire form, and prune any shoots that become too long.

**REBLOOMING / REPOTTING** The natural flowering time for these plants is from late spring through early autumn (June-September) although it can run later. To encourage reflowering in the spring, prune back weak growth and soft wood during the winter; water plants sparingly; and keep them at 55 F to 65 F for at least three months, then move to a warmer environment (72 F to 80 F) with lots of light. After the buds have set, mark the pot to ensure it always faces the same direction; plant movement can cause buds and blooms to drop. Repot plants in the spring every two to four years.

### challenges

**PESTS** These sweetly scented plants are particularly susceptible to mealybugs, scale insects, spider mites, thrips (especially in the warmer months) and aphids (if too warm in the winter). Remove mealybugs with rubbing-alcohol-soaked cotton swabs. Treat infestations of scale, mites, thrips and aphids by washing or spraying plants with insecticidal soap.

**YELLOWING LEAVES** Insufficient light, hard water and iron-deficient soil can cause leaves to turn yellow.

**WITHERING BUDS** Underwatering is the usual cause of buds that dry before opening.

### purchasing tips

- Select plants with both buds and open blooms that are bright white, waxy and plump.
- Make sure there are at least five buds and/or blooms per cluster.
- Check plants for bruised leaves or blooms, yellow or spotted foliage, mold and wilt.
- Seek out plants that have vines that are wrapped around the wire form at least twice.

### fun facts

**WHAT'S IN THE NAMES** "*Stephanotis*" comes from the Greek words "*stephanos*," for crown, and "*otos*," for ear, referring to the five earlike "petals" that form the star-shape blooms. The species name "*floribunda*" means abundant flowers.

**FAMILY MATTERS** *Stephanotis* plants are members of the *Asclepiadaceae* (as-klee-pee-ad-AY-see-ay), or milkweed, family. Relatives include *Asclepias* (butterfly weed), *Hoya* (wax plant), *Ceropegia* (rosary vine), and *Oxypetalum/Tweedia*.

**HOME SWEET HOME** *Stephanotises* are native to Madagascar, a tropical island nation in the Indian Ocean off the southeast coast of Africa.

**FRAGRANCE EMISSION** The release of fragrance by *Stephanotises* is circadian in nature, increasing and decreasing about seven times per day. **sfr**