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Kalanchoe tomentosa

by Colin C Walker



Kalanchoe is a relatively large genus of Crassulaceae with around 150 species widely distributed throughout southern and tropical east Africa, Arabia and south-east Asia. Madagascar, however, is a centre of diversity with around 60 endemic species, including most of the choice species of particular interest to growers (Boiteau & Allorge-Boiteau, 1995).

Kalanchoe tomentosa is a very attractive species that has become popular in cultivation. It is endemic to mountainous regions of central Madagascar where it grows on granite rocks (Smith et al., 2019).

The name '*tomentosa*' is derived from the Latin '*tomentosus*' meaning 'hairy', referring to the felt-like covering of the whole plant. The hairs are generally coarse, white to dark brown or reddish brown, especially on the leaf edges and tips. It has a number of common names including the 'Panda Plant'. It is a very variable species and several cultivars are available.

My plant, now about 40cm tall, has been moderately slow growing. The species is described as growing up to 1m tall and branching modestly, so it can be propagated from stem cuttings. Leaves will also root and shoot but I have yet to try this method of propagation.

My plant has yet to flower, but the flower spike is described as being up to 80cm tall, bearing erect flowers varying in colour from green, through yellow-brown to purple (Boiteau & Allorge-Boiteau, 1995). ■

Photo: Colin C Walker

References

- Boiteau, P. & Allorge-Boiteau, L. (1995) *Kalanchoe (Crassulacées) de Madagascar. Systématique, écophysologie et phytochimie*. Karthala, Paris.
- Smith, G.F., Figueiredo, E., & van Wyk, A.E. (2019) *Kalanchoe (Crassulaceae) in southern Africa*. Academic Press/Elsevier, London