

Gardenia taitensis

Gardenia taitensis^[2] (also called **Tahitian Gardenia** or **Tiaré Flower**) is a species of plant in the Rubiaceae family. It is an evergreen tropical shrub that grows to 4 m tall and has glossy dark green leaves (5–16 cm long) that are oppositely arranged along the stem. The flower is creamy white and pinwheel-shaped with five-to-nine lobes (each lobe 2–4 cm long) and fragrant. Native to the highland shores of the South Pacific, it has the distinction of being one of the few cultivated plants native to Polynesia. It is the national flower of French Polynesia and the Cook Islands.

The name Tahitian Gardenia is somewhat a misnomer because it is neither native nor naturalised in Tahiti. The first acceptable scientific name for the plant was based on Tahitian specimens collected by Jules Dumont d'Urville in 1824. Hence the scientific name of *Gardenia taitensis*, and the English name of Tahitian Gardenia or Tiaré Flower. It was first collected in Tahiti, by the Forsters on Captain Cook's first Pacific voyage (1768–1771), although it was misidentified as *Gardenia florida*.^[3]

The plant originates from Melanesia and Western Polynesia. It is an aboriginal introduction to the Cook Islands and French Polynesia and possibly Hawaii.^[4]



The flower is used to make *Monoï Tiaré Tahiti*, a perfume-oil made by infusing the blossoms in coconut oil.

1 Synonyms

- *Gardenia weissichii*
- *Gardenia tahitensis*
- *Randia tahitensis*

2 Indigenous names

- Tiare mā'ohi, Tiaré tahiti (French Polynesia)
- Tiare māori, Tialé māoli (Cook Islands)
- Pua Samoa, Pua fiti (Samoa)
- Siale Tonga (Tonga)
- Bua (Fiji)

3 Common uses

- Polynesian people in the Pacific islands use the extremely fragrant blooms in their flower necklaces,

which are called “Ei” in the Cook Islands, “Hei” in Tahiti or “Lei” in Hawaii.

- In some Pacific island traditions, wearing a flower indicates relationship status. A flower worn on the left ear means the person is taken and on the right ear means available.
- The plant is believed to have medicinal properties to treat several ailments. In Tonga a bark infusion is dripped into the nose, eyes and mouth to treat “ghost sickness”. In Samoa parts of the plant are used to treat inflammation.^[5]
- The flower is used to make *Monoï Tiare Tahiti*, a perfume-oil made by infusing the blossoms in coconut oil (see *enfleurage*).^[6]
- Tiare is also used in niche perfumery but its prohibitively high cost excludes use in commercial perfumery. Notable examples include *Tiare* by Ormonde Jayne launched in 2009^[7] and *Tiare* by Chantecaille.^[8] The Tiare flowers are hand picked

and then laid unopened in oil for 15 days to obtain the extract.

- Tiare is used in a line of Aviva Pure products for natural skin & hair care.

4 Gallery

- Flower buds
 - Foliage
 - Flower
- Opening flower
- Growth habit

5 References

- [1] International Organization for Plant Information (IOPI). "Plant Name Search Results" (HTML). *International Plant Names Index*. Retrieved 12 May 2009.
- [2] "Monoi and the Tiare Flower". Retrieved 2016-01-04. Emblem of TAHITI and pillar of Polynesian traditions, its Latin name is "Gardenia Tahitensis" but that magnificent little flowers with snow-white petals arranged in the form of a star is more popularly known as Tiaré Tahiti or Tiaré Mahoi (pronounced tee-a-ray).
- [3] Cook Islands Biodiversity & Natural Heritage Database : Gardenia taitensis - Tahitian Gardenia
- [4] Gardenia taitensis - National Tropical Garden Plant Database
- [5] Polynesian herbal medicine By W Arthur Whistler (1992) p. 52, 69, 150 Google Books
- [6] The History of Monoi Tiare Tahiti at Monoi.com
- [7] Ormonde Jayne - Tiare Perfume Collection by Linda Pilkington
- [8] Chantecaille Tiare Perfume at chantecaille.com

6 External links

- The Tiaré Flower (or Gardenia tahitensis)
- USDA Plants Database: Gardenia taitensis - plants.usda.gov
- The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks 1768-1771, Gardenia taitensis - nzetc.org
- Tiare.bg - flowers

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