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Miscellaneous

Proper name for Christmas Star

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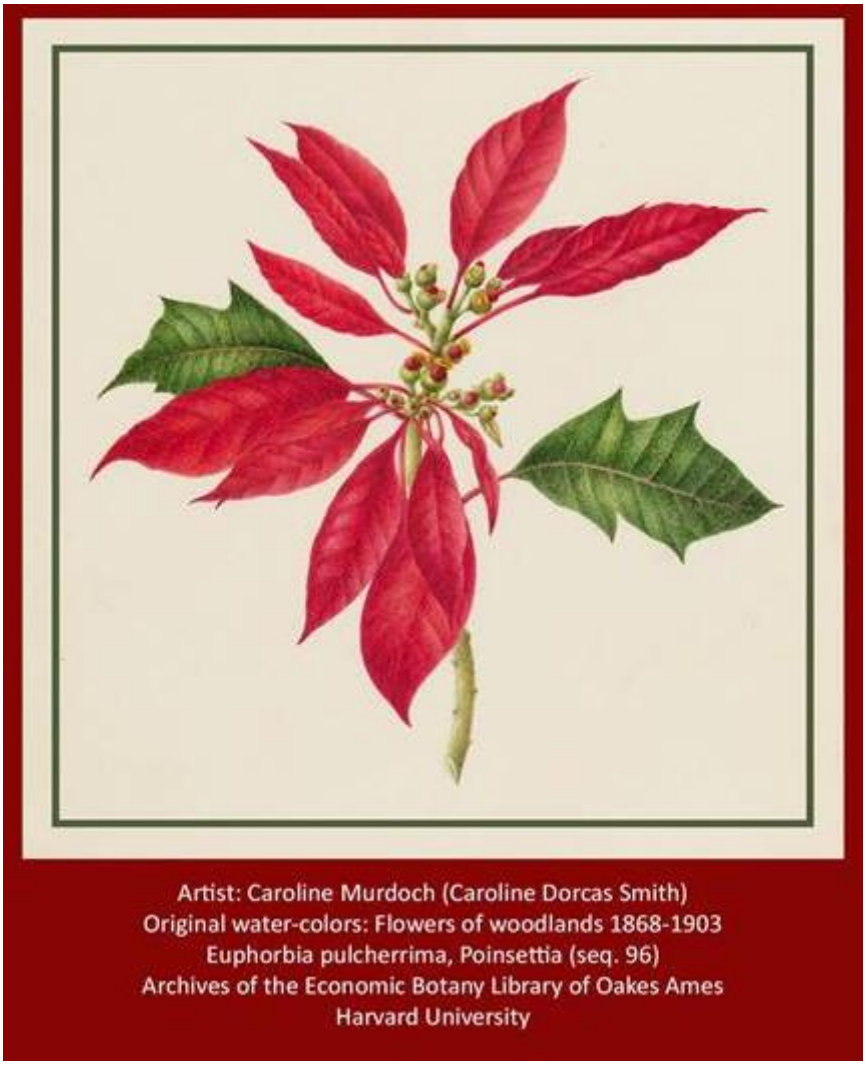

This artwork is from the book: Flowers of woodlands (1868—1903)

One may know this plant, a native of Mexico, either as ***Euphorbia pulcherrima*** Willd. ex Klotzsch (current name): [*Euphorbia* for Euphorbus, first-century A.D. Greek physician; *pulcherrima* = beautiful] or *Poinsettia pulcherrima* (Willd. ex Klotzsch) Graham (former name): [*Poinsettia* for Joel Robert Poinsett (1779-1851), a South Carolinian and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico (1825—1829), who is believed to have introduced this plant from Mexico to USA; *pulcherrima* = beautiful].

Unless someone still remembers their botany class: what looks like an apetalous bisexual flower is a reduced inflorescence, called the *cyathium*; it is subtended by a cupular involucre simulating a calyx and usually consists of several – many stamens and a single pistil. Each stamen represents a male flower (lacking a calyx and corolla), while the single terminal pistil represents a female flower (also lacking a calyx and corolla). Each stamen has a jointed stalk indicating an upper filament and a lower pedicel.

A similar inflorescence is seen in *Anthostema* A.Juss. (found in Africa and Madagascar), but each stamen has its own tubular perianth (= calyx & corolla together); likewise, the single pistil has its own tubular perianth (Rendle, 1952).

One may find additional information on the *cyathium* and its evolution in the publication by Prenner and Rudall (2007).

References

Caroline Murdoch's Wildflower Paintings

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