

Exceptions to the RULE

A review by David Costen

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Preface:

There has over the years been much confusion around *P. 'St. Rule'* and *P. gibertii*. This short article is an attempt to document the evidence.

Chronology:

1900 *P. 'Saint Rule'* (*P. subpeltata* x *P. 'Buonaparte'* {*P. quadrangularis* x *P. alata*}) John Wilson's hybrid – is published. ¹

1991 & 1996 *P. 'St. Rule'* obtained by John Vanderplank from Kew Gardens, London is described in both his first and second editions. John notes the similarities between this plant and *P. subpeltata* but doubted the paternity of the alleged hybrid. ^{2,3,4}

1997 Torsten Ulmer would have the reader of his book believe that *P. 'St. Rule'* is a synonym for *P. gibertii*. ⁵



St. Rule courtesy Henk Wouters

July 2000 – By this time a consensus has emerged in discussions in the *Passiflora Enthusiast Discussion List* that *P. 'St. Rule'* is really the same thing as *P. gibertii* – chiefly because the plant has fertile pollen and produces fruit. ⁶

Passiflora Register 2003 “The taxon found in general cultivation is possibly a cultivar or selection of *gibertii*.” (J. Vanderplank)

2004 *Passionflowers of the World* – Torsten Ulmer & John MacDougal would have the reader believe *P. 'St. Rule'* is a synonym for *P. gibertii*. ⁷



P. gibertii courtesy Mauro Peixoto

However, it was with the introduction of the true *P. gibertii* into Europe that a re-evaluation started to take place.

In August 2003 in the *Passiflora Enthusiast Discussion List* Henk Wouters writes “I visited Piet Moerman here in Holland and he grows two different *gibertii*.”

A species native to Argentina, southern Brazil, and Paraguay.



P. pallens (Dominica) and *P. 'St. Rule'* courtesy Henk Wouters

Henk was amongst the first to compare *P. 'St. Rule'* with *P. pallens* and, whilst he considered them close, it is obvious that there are differences in the centre of the corona.

Not only does the flower of *P. 'St. Rule'* look closer to *P. pallens* but it's seeds are the same shape as *P. pallens* (tridentate) and unlike those of *P. gibertii*.



Seeds of P. gibertii courtesy Mauro Peixoto



Supplied by Martin Wills, ex John Vanderplank



P. pallens courtesy Mike Abrams (Florida)

An endangered species in Florida, *P. pallens* occurs also in Dominica & Cuba.

The three pictures of *P. pallens* found in researching this story all exhibit a uniformity in the short corona filaments at the centre of the flower: two further examples also from Florida may be viewed at the internet addresses below.

<http://www.plantatlas.usf.edu/images.asp?plantID=602>

<http://www.flwildflowers.com/wildflowers/passip45.jpg>

Interim conclusions:



'John Crow' (*P. subpeltata* x *P. pallens*) - breeder Martin Wills

1/ *P. 'St. Rule'* is not commonly believed to be a hybrid involving section *quadrangulares*.

1/ *P. 'St. Rule'* is not identical to *P. gibertii*.

2/ *P. 'St. Rule'* may be co specific with *P. pallens* OR

3/ *P. 'St. Rule'* may be the result of a hybrid between two closely related species such as *P. subpeltata* and *P. pallens*: the cross has been produced in both directions.⁸

The picture (left) suggests that these two species are not particularly close genetically in view of the state of the anthers. Though hybrids between closely related species can produce fertile pollen and fruit, it is unlikely that *P. 'St. Rule'* is a hybrid because over time it would have been noted that its offspring exhibited traits of the alleged grandparents ('segregation', botanically speaking). *P. 'St. Rule'* produces uniform offspring.⁹

OR

4/ *P. 'St. Rule'* may be a distinct species, possibly *P. atomaria*? A native of coastal Panama, Colombia and Venezuela.

Footnote:

28 February 2007 – I am informed by John Vanderplank that he obtained *P. 'St. Rule'* from Kew Gardens but only subsequently learned, at a much later date, that the taxon had, in fact, been wild collected as seed from Venezuela.

Acknowledgments/bibliography:

- ¹ Royal Horticultural Society Journal, London
- ² Passion Flowers, (ISBN 0-304-34076-6)
- ³ Passion Flowers second edition (ISBN 0-304-34216-5)
- ⁴ personal correspondence with Dr. John Vanderplank.
- ⁵ Passionsblumen (ISBN 3-00-000684-2)
- ⁶ <https://listserv.surfnet.nl/archives/passiflora-l.html>
- ⁷ Passiflora Passionflowers of the World (ISBN 0-88192-648-5)
- ⁸ personal correspondence with Martin Wills
- ⁹ Frank Moser – Passiflora Enthusiast Discussion List January 2007
- ¹⁰ Dr. Les King for reviewing article.