



## The genus *Calandrinia* Kunth in the Australian deserts

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It is necessary to admit that in the 80s, almost nobody was interested in the Australian succulents, simply because they were practically unknown to the succulentophile and because the literature concerning them did not exist. During a four-month expedition in 1980 in the Australian deserts, I was able to realize that neglect would last for an even longer time, because succulent numbers seem to be restricted, most of them being halophytes, are virtually not suited to our greenhouses. However, an exception is the genus *Calandrinia*.

From the family Portulacaceae, *Calandrinia* is an American genus which we also find in Australia. It turns out that the American and Australian species present considerable differences; thus, they were separated by creating a new genus, *Parakeelya*, a name collectively used in Australia to these plants as a common name, regrettably not so new,





*Calandrinia balonensis*, Simpson desert, Australia.(photo: J.L.).



*Calandrinia creethae*



*Calandrinia papillata*, Australia (photos: J.L.).



*Calandrinia polyandra*



*Calandrinia remota*, Australia (photos: J.L.).

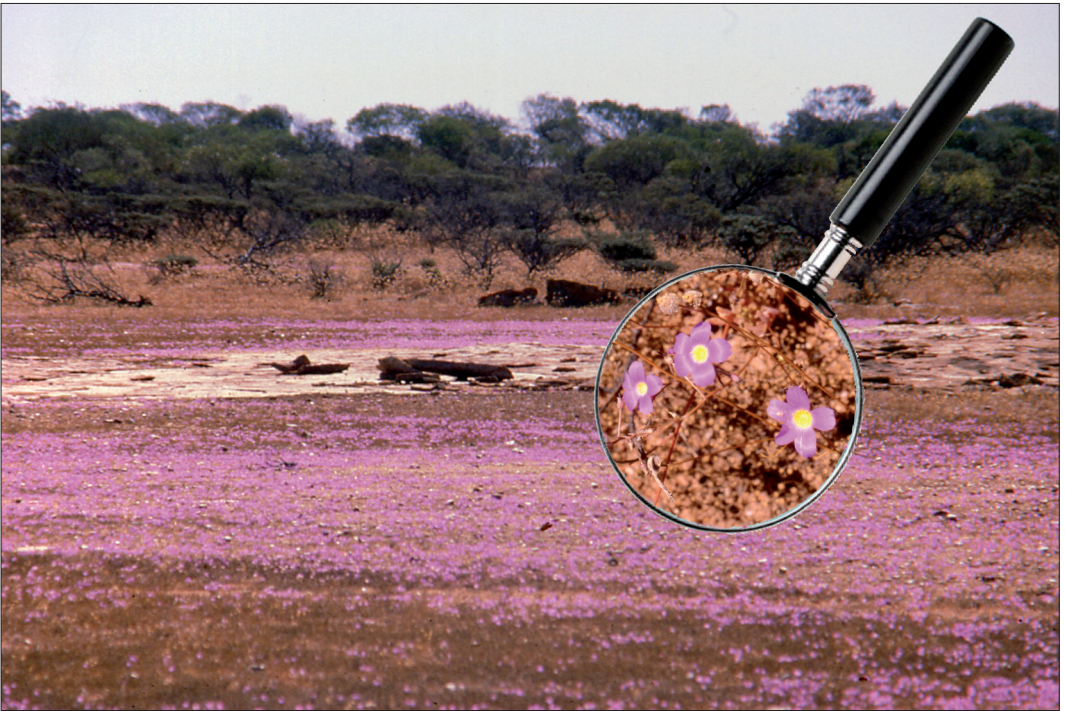


*Calandrinia crispisepala*, habitat, Australie (photo: J.L.).

because this last name had already been used to define another taxon, *Rumicastrum*, where the current species of Australian calandrinias would be enclosed. At the moment, while we are waiting for a revision and for a likely change of name, all stay in *Calandrinia*. The genus is dedicated to a botanist of the 18th century, Jean-Louis Calandrini, a Swiss scientist.

According to Attila Kapitany (author-publisher of the magnificent and unique work on the subject, *Australian Succulent Plants*, 2007), there would be about thirty endemic species growing in the arid zones of Australia, recognizable through their seed features and structure; the first species that I managed to grow and to make bloom in a greenhouse in Nantes (France) is *Calandrinia balonensis*, and later, some more species. I found it in the desert of Simpson, on areas covered with *Spinifex*, and sometimes in zones with locust trees, on red sandy soils.

They are herbaceous plants with strongly succulent leaves, very varied forms, growing in clumps on sandy soil and making carpets. Leaves are extremely fleshy, and edible. They saved, as it is said, the life of several explorers of the Australian deserts. Flowers have five (or more) petals, are more or less purple pink, sometimes white, and they appear generally at the end of a long stem and last approximately a day. During the southern spring, the different species form immense carpets of short-lived flowers which decorate the desert



*Calandrinia eremacea*, habitat, Australia.(photo: J.L.).



*Calandrinia primuliflora*, habitat, Australia.(photo: J.L.).

and attract the traveller.

Being annual or biennial, the interest to grow them is regrettably, as for *Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum* or *M. crystallinum*, limited enough. Their sowing is nevertheless easy, the flowering is fast and plentiful.

Text and photo: J.L.

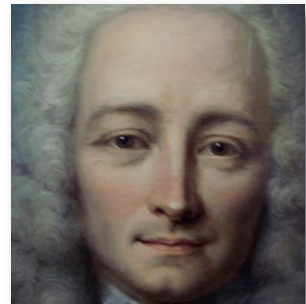


Australian Calandrinias in cultivation in France in the 80's (photo & coll. : J.L.).

### **The genus *Calandrinia* arose from a mistake about the person!**

Born in 1703 and died in 1758, of a Tuscan Protestant family which had taken refuge in Switzerland, Jean-Louis Calandrini was a physicist, a mathematician and a professor of philosophy, author of works on trigonometry, the aurora borealis, comets and on lightning effects. Kunth dedicated him the genus *Calandrinia* in 1823, by mistake! Indeed, Jean-François Séguier, a French botanist, indicated in his references, an essay presented by J-L. Calandrini, *Theses physicae of vegetatione and generatione plantarum resp. Jacob Andrea, on 1734*, but without quoting the author completely, which was in fact Jacob Andrea Trembley.

By copying out the article, the Swiss naturalist Albrecht von Haller omitted the end and attributed by default, the theses of Trembley to J.-L. Calandrini. De Candolle followed this bibliography, and Kunth, taking in reference the authors' catalogue of De Candolle, used the name of Calandrini instead of Trembley!



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