

## **RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN BOTANIST RECOGNIZED FOR OUTSTANDING SCIENTIFIC PRESENTATION AT AMERICAN BOTANICAL MEETINGS**

St. Louis, Missouri, July 13, 2011 — The American Society of Plant Taxonomists awarded Erin Tripp, an expert on wild petunias, their George R. Cooley Award for Best Contributed Paper in Plant Systematics at the society's annual meeting. During Tripp's presentation, entitled "*Physacanthus* (Acanthaceae): a heteroplasmic, intergeneric, interlineage hybrid?", she marshaled extensive morphological and genetic evidence to present what one award judge described as "the complete story" of a west African plant genus with previously uncertain evolutionary origins.

Tripp is a postdoctoral fellow at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont, California. She received her Ph.D. from Duke University in 2008 and has published extensively on wild petunias and their relatives since 2006. Her co-authors on the paper include Lucinda McDade and Siti Fatimah Isa, both also of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, and Iain Darbyshire of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The award is named for George R. Cooley, a successful banker who studied plants and worked in conservation in retirement. Several plants bear his name, including *Justicia cooleyi*, a plant that just happens to be a close relative to the plants in Tripp's study. It is awarded to graduate students or early career researchers whose work is judged to be noteworthy as complete, synthetic, and original.

About the American Society of Plant Taxonomists:

The American Society of Plant Taxonomists promotes the research and teaching of the taxonomy, systematics, and phylogeny of vascular and nonvascular plants. Organized in 1935, the Society has a membership of over 1300. The Society publishes *Systematic Botany* and *Systematic Botany Monographs*, supports a variety of honorary and charitable activities, and conducts scientific meetings each summer. Information on the Society's 2011 joint meeting with three other American botanical societies (Botany 2011) can be found at <http://www.botanyconference.org/>.

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