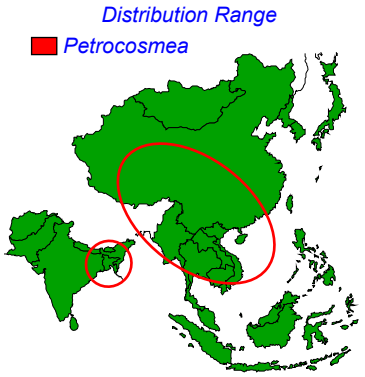
PETROCOSMEA: An Introduction

Petrocosmea is a small Old World genus native to western China, northeast India, Thailand, southern Vietnam, and Myanmar. The genus was described in 1887 by Daniel Oliver, Professor of Botany (University College, London), after being discovered in southwest China by Dr. Augustin Henry earlier in the decade.

Petrocosmeas are forest dwelling perennial herbs which are either terrestrial or rupicolous in nature. The genus is most commonly found growing on limestone rocks at elevations between 300 and 3100 metres above sea level. As a result, petrocosmeas require cooler to colder conditions to grow well. Some species, in fact, are considered hardy in temperate climates if overwintered in sheltered settings. Flowers range from white to shades of blue and purple.

In China petrocosmeas are known as “shi hu die shu”, meaning “the stone butterfly genus”.

P. minor



CLASSIFICATION

Family:	GESNERIACEAE
Subfamily:	CYRTANDROIDEAE
Tribe:	DIDYMOCARPEAE
Genus:	PETROCOSMEA
Sub-genera:	None
No. of Species:	28
Type Species:	Petrocosmea sinensis

Distribution Range: The majority of species (23) are endemic to western China (provinces of Hebei, Sichuan and Yunnan). Petrocosmeas are also endemic to NE India, Myanmar (Burma), southern Vietnam, and Thailand.

Name Derivation: Latin based on the Greek words for “pretty” and “rock”.

Root Structure: Fibrous.

Growth Habit: Rosette.

Chromosone Count: 34.

P. formosa

P. parryorum

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

Temperature: Cool to cold growing - 50 to 70 degrees F; 10 to 20 degrees C. Species such as flaccida can tolerate temperatures reaching into the mid-80s F (28^{o} C) while other species can tolerate temperatures falling into the low 40s F (5^{o} C).

Watering: Bottom, top or wick watering. Potting mixture must be kept constantly moist during active growth.

Light: Low light.

Humidity: 40 to 50 percent.

Fertilizer: Continuously with a non-urea based formulation, e.g., Dyna Gro 7-9-5.

Soil: Neutral, heading upward to slightly alkaline; Basic Potting Mixture is appropriate. The addition of gritty material such as very coarse sand or chicken grits is recommended.

P. flaccida