

Kalanchoe fedtschenkoi

Kalanchoe is a fairly large genus in the Crassula Family, with over 100 species which are mostly from Africa and Madagascar. Because so many of them have tropical origins, they have limited tolerance for freezing weather and are more widely used in gardens in frost-free climates than they are in our area. However, there are some which can be grown in the warmer parts of the Bay Area, and even in inland locations if given a protected spot. One of these is the attractively-colored *Kalanchoe fedtschenkoi*, native to Madagascar.

The common name for *Kalanchoe fedtschenkoi* is Lavender Scallops, in reference to its leaves with scalloped margins. In sunny positions, these take on a beautiful lavender color, while in shadier spots they are blue-green. The coloration varies from one form of the species to another, with some plants having a blush of pink. Frequently, there are dark blotches at the notches on the leaf margins. There are also variegated forms whose leaves have white or yellowish-white markings.

Plants of this species branch freely to form a small shrub up to about 2 feet tall. The stems are slender but rigid, and initially they are upright. As they lengthen with age, they sprawl to the side, sending down aerial roots which find their way down to the soil. In time, the clump may expand to become several feet across.

Kalanchoe fedtschenkoi comes into flower in late winter, with the flower clusters held above the foliage on purple stems. The pendent flowers have sepals with a pearly sheen clasping their bases, and emerging from these are four flaring petals. On our plant at The Ruth Bancroft Garden, the sepals are lavender-gray, but they may be pale green or pinkish on other forms. The petals are also variable, light orange on our specimen, but sometimes red-orange or rose on other plants.

With its wonderful pastel colors, this species of *Kalanchoe* makes an attractive garden plant. In more tropical climates such as south Florida or Hawaii, it may spread too much and become invasive, but this is not a problem in northern California. Plants are quite easy to grow, rooting readily from cuttings and needing only a fast-draining mix, as with other succulents. It can tolerate cold down to about 27° F, but should have protection if temperatures fall below this.

