

Jacaranda mimosifolia—*Jacaranda*

Among the many flowering tree species on Victoria Avenue and around Southern California, *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, Jacaranda is the most spectacular and most widely loved! It is a member of the large (120 genera and about 800 species) family known as the Bignoneaceae. This is a tropical and subtropical family of shrubs, vines and trees. Other ornamental trees in this family include, *Catalpa*, *Chitalpa*, *Hydroanthus* and *Paulownia*. *Jacaranda* is native to the drier areas of South America (S. Brazil, NE Argentina and N. Uruguay) and is now cultivated throughout the tropical and subtropical areas of the world. It is the official tree of Pretoria, South Africa. This species is recognizable from great distances in April-June by its breath-taking display of loosely clustered, lavender-blue, tubular flowers that cover the entire canopy. The large, finely dissected, fern-like leaves are usually shed in February-March and are replaced after flowering to produce welcome shade in the summer and fall months. The fruits are woody, flattened and circular in outline and are often used in dry plant displays. The tree reaches 50 feet in height and spreads out forming a wide crown. The name “Jacaranda” comes from its common name in Brazil, where the bark and leaves were used for medicinal purposes. It was first transported to Europe in 1818 and grown in greenhouses. It has been planted as a street tree in Southern California since at least 1908.

There are many other ornamentals from this family on Victoria Avenue or around town. Other trees are *Paulownia tomentosa*, Royal Paulownia, *Hydroanthus impetiginosa*, Pink Tabebuia and *Chitalpa*. There are a number of woody vines in the family with red or purple, tubular flowers called Trumpet Creepers (*Campsis spp.*, *Distictis spp.* and *Chytostoma callistegoides*), as well as the orange flowered, shrubby cape honeysuckle (*Tecomaria capensis*).

