Vinca major & V.minor - Common periwinkle

The periwinkles have been with us for many, many years and came into the country, respectively from Madagascar and India and central and southern Europe where V.major and V.minor are indigenous. Both have been used in the pharmaceutical industry and medicinally. Catharanthus roseus is used to treat Hodgkin’s disease and Vinca major and V.minor to stimulate blood circulation and muscle action. Both plants are in the Apocynaceae family.

During the 80’s the Madagascar periwinkle (Catharanthus roseus) was described as “unsurpassed for the odd shady corner where with its sprawling habit and glossy green leaves it would be most at home”. Previously listed as a special effect weed it is not currently listed – however be aware that the whole plant is poisonous.

Vinca major and V.minor were described under one heading as a trailing perennial and vigorous groundcover that would grow well in rocky areas, seaside gardens and sloping banks. The size of the blue flowers is the only significant difference between these two. These are also poisonous. V.major ‘Variegata’ the cream and green version, was a firm favourite with gardeners in general during the 70’s and 80’s – they were just everywhere! These SAPIA (SA Plant Invader Atlas) subjects invade riverbanks, rocky outcrops, roadsides, plantations, forest and coastal scrub. Its adaptation in Wilderness (sloping banks, rocky areas) where it has not been planted and in the plantation areas on the lower slopes of the Outeniqua Mountain where they were pointed out to us several years ago; provide plenty of evidence substantiating its invasive potential.

**Identification:** The Common periwinkle is a vigorous groundcover with glossy dark green trailing stems and open blue flowers that appear in spring.

**Control:** In the new National List of Invasive Species 2014 both V.major and V.minor are listed as Category 1b: Invasive species which must be controlled and wherever possible, removed and destroyed. Any form of trade or planting is strictly prohibited. Sterile hybrids are exempted. Please don’t plant or propagate these species and when revamping your garden replace with indigenous groundcovers.

**Substitutes:** Some of our special favourites: Barleria repens (five colour variants), Asystasia gangetica, Helichrysum petiolare (three colour variants), Stachys aethiopica and Justicia capensis (coastal form)