ECONOMIC USES
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The economic importance of Agapetes is not thoroughly studied. Beautiful foliage and flowers attracted local people to cultivate different species as pot plants, many of them have great potential in horticulture.

Many Agapetes species are in cultivation since past 100 years (Argent & Woods, 1986). Nearly 15 species and one variety and one cultivated hybrid of Agapetes are reported under cultivation in Botanical garden at Edinburgh. Plant collectors like Frank Kingdon Ward, George Forrest, Thomas Booth, Thomas Lobb, Gammie, Grierson, David Long, David Chamberlain, Cox and Hutchinson collected different species from Eastern Asia, which are introduced and cultivated in different European gardens like Kew and Edinburgh.

Most species of Agapetes can be grown in sheltered mild, frost-free climate and some species can even withstand a few degrees of frost. But these plants are best planted under trees in temperate countries. They are best suited to a well-drained spots such as the top of a branch or among rocks and in acidic (pH 5.5), humus-rich soil. They grow well in a temperature as minimum as 13°C although several species can withstand much colder conditions, like Agapetes ‘Ludgvan Cross’, A. grandiflora var. macrantha. As conservatory plants they prefer a peaty medium in a large pot or hanging basket, and should be kept in good light with regular watering and misting. The species of Agapetes can easily be cultivated through cuttings, which are relatively easy to root.

A. buxifolia is cultivated by Thomas Nuttall from a plant collected by his nephew Thomas Booth from Duphla Hills of Arunachal Pradesh, in 1855. William Hooker described it as a new species in Curtis’s Botanical Magazine (t. 5012). It was exhibited by Mr. J. Bennett-Poe at the Royal Horticultural Society and was given an award of Merit in 1900.

A. incurvata is in cultivation since 1860 and was introduced by Thomas Lobb to Veitch’s nursery. It flowered in 1860 and was drawn and described in the Botanical Magazine (t. 5198) as Pentapterygium rugosum. In cultivation it shows white to pink corolla with pale yellow mouth and reticulation in dark purple lateral vein compared to red corolla in the wild. It was exhibited at the Royal Horticultural Society in November 1934 by Miss G. Waterer of Ludgvan, Cornwall and received an Award of

*Agapetes ‘Ludgvan’* is a hybrid between *A. incurvata* and *A. serpens*. It looks more or less like *A. incurvata* but more hardy than both of the parents. At Edinburgh it was labelled as *Agapetes ‘Ludgvan’* and exhibited by Miss G.M. Talbot to the Floral Committee at the Royal Horticultural Society in 1947.

*A. mannii* was cultivated in Edinburgh from the seeds obtained from the New York Botanic Garden, collected by Kingdon Ward (No. 19097).

*A. moorei* was cultivated by Sir Frederick Moore and he collected the plant from James O’Brien, a plant dealer in London. James O’Brien collected it from an unknown plant collector. Sir Frederick Moore cultivated it in Glasnevin and when flowered sent to Kew for drawing and description in Curtis’s Botanical Magazine (t. 7928). This plant probably is in cultivation for nearly a century.

*A. obovata* is also cultivated in Edinburgh. *A. odontocera* behaves quite differently in cultivation with white corolla with prominent red horizontal veins but turns red with darker red veins as the flower matures compared to scarlet red flowers in wild. The plant cultivated in Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh was collected by David Chamberlain (No. 106) from Khasia hills.

*A. serpens* is the first cultivated species of this genus, collected by Mr. Gammie and was drawn in 1884 for J.D. Hooker in Botanical Magazine (t. 6777). This species is widely used as an ornamental. The word ‘serpens’, in latin means serpent or ‘snake’ which could be referred to the creeping habit or arching branches of this graceful plant or it could also refer to the ‘snake-skin’ pattern on the petals.

*A. smithiana* is cultivated at Kew since 1886 and it was introduced in Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh from Bhutan by Grierson and Long (No. 3075) in 1982. *A. smithiana* var. *major* was introduced by Cox and Hutchinson (No. 413) in 1984.

*A. grandiflora* var. *macrantha* was introduced by Thomas Lobb to Veitch’s nursery, after cultivation it flowered in 1850. It was awarded as First Class certificate in 1860 and was also drawn in the Botanical Magazine (t. 4566).

*A. serpens, Agapetes ‘Ludgvan Cross’* and *A. smithiana* and few other species are used for large hanging baskets.
During field surveys it was found that *A. borii*, *A. serpens*, *A. incurvata*, *A. affinis*, *A. odontocera*, *A. setigera*, *A. obovata*, *A. mannii*, *A. grandiflora* are cultivated as ornamentals and sold in the market by local people in different parts of North-East India and in Sikkim.

Leaves of *A. saligna* are used as substitute of Tea in some parts of India due to their tannin content (Anonymous, 1985).

Corolla tubes of *A. miniata*, *A. megacarpa* var. *lohitensis*, *A. affinis*, *A. odontocera*, *A. setigera*, *A. grandiflora* are used as vegetable by local people in North East India for their sour taste. Sometimes corollas are cooked with dry fish.

Fruits of *A. obovata* are edible. *A. serpens* is also used as fodder for cattle.