

**The Oleander Fairy Tale,
or how 'Kewpie' journeyed through the big wide world and came home
again.**



Nerium Oleander "KEWPIE"

And once again, the concentrated energy of a hurricane lurked over the Gulf of Mexico. Nature awaited its impact on the coast. The heavens opened over Galveston, Texas, and the heavy tropical deluge brought about a great flood. The inhabitants knew that their struggle with the forces of Nature would demand all their strength.

The storm abated and the sun appeared once more. We, the seedling children of the oleanders, lay in our earthen beds and waited for its warm breath. Soon, we hopped happily out of our seed coats. We strained and stretched, as we wanted to get a peek at the world out there. Oh, it was beautiful – a blooming garden!

My sisters and I had a lovely and sunny life. We grew into healthy and vigorous oleander plants. The great moment of our first blossoms was approaching. The bright buds unfurled their petals, and the diverse colors began to glow. Now, people's interest was awakened. They observed us extensively; they discussed, took photos, and documented. They assigned

names, so that they would not get us confused later. But why was my pot always being set off to the side? People were whispering. Trembling spread over my branches – did they not want me? Then a gentle hand reached toward me, poured water over my roots, and wide-open eyes beheld my blossoms:

“What an extraordinary pattern on the petals! As if pink paint ran over a white flower and left behind such irregular streaks! A pink which reminds us of the wild oleander on the Mediterranean. The large petals form a windmill shape which spin outward – but this doesn’t appear to be the norm, because – look at another twig, the blossoms here are uniformly pink. You can also see a different corona shape! In short, a spectacular new oleander flower has been born here, and its uniqueness should be reflected even in its name!”







A beautiful young lady with blond locks once founded the International Oleander Society in Galveston - Maureen Elisabeth 'Kewpie' Gaido - she was in love with all of the gorgeous oleander blossoms. She worked tirelessly to promote the oleander and its merits all across the land, even to the President of the USA, Ronald Reagan! Galveston became the Oleander City. My sap bubbled with happiness – I was to bear the name of our advocate?!

NERIUM Oleander „Kewpie“

Visitors came to Galveston from all over the world. One of them fell in love with my striking “Kewpie”-blossoms and took me to “Old Europe” in the form of a few cuttings. And that’s how I left Galveston and began my adventure!

All of my twigs were treated with great attentiveness and loving care, and soon “Kewpie”, in multicolored, lacquered ceramic pots, adorned a big veranda in Berlin, the capital of Germany. But unfortunately, Nature brought a lot of rain and we often lamented with her.

The people set out on a trip to Greece. A “Kewpie” plant was to be a gift from the guests – I was to go along! Joyfully, I welcomed the light and warmth! Wonderful – finally in the South again! My blossoms were sparse and not too promising owing to the stress of the trip. The hosts’ enthusiasm was guarded at first, but when they were handed photos, they went wild! Their excitement over this new oleander was piqued!

I was planted in Greek garden soil and received the shock of my life – a soft, limey soil, sandy and well-drained too, enveloped my roots. The ground water, from a deep well, was pleasantly cool. The high calcium content of the water

was a surprise, and it had a positive influence on my growth. But there was more! I stood in a little “fairytale forest”!

The butterfly-shaped flowers of the Bauhinia glowed in wine-red and purple, in dense clusters on long branches. Dark red, beak-shaped flowers bloomed on the thorny branches of the Erythrina. Little sky-blue bells swayed in the delicate filigreed foliage of the Jacaranda. The branches of Callistemon bore red, white, and yellow bottlebrushes. Unique “hairbrushes” in yellow-brown and red on the Grevillea. The woody flower balls of the Eucalyptus, with their dark red “hair”, were the flowering high point from Australia. The intense fragrance of orange and lemon blossoms wafted through the air and blended with the glowing colors of the climbing bougainvillea. The many oleander sisters which surrounded us and also grew between trees and banana plants, roses and hibiscus, were the hit of the summer! Their wealth of colorful blooms was the only one in the heat of midsummer. When everything else wilted under the blazing sun, their radiant blossoms won the competition! But – what was being whispered in the “Green World”? The oleanders would also be the “guards” here? Their toxic chemicals would ward off harmful pests? Well, there was peace underground; there had never been a case of the poisonous oleander roots damaging a cultivated plant.

The years went by, and “Kewpie” became a mighty and many-branched shrub. Cuttings from my branches were able to bring a new generation of “Kewpies” to life. In Austria, Hungary, Germany, and France, “Kewpie” became famous as a rare oleander variety from the USA with unique blossoms.

And yet again there was a journey. This time, the gift from a guest came in the form of a watercolor. The gesture was to be a return of “Kewpie” to the bosom of her family. The painting was to bring the thanks of the many fans of “Kewpie” in Europe to the granddaughter of the great Kewpie Gaido.



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