

US00PP26431P2

(12) **United States Plant Patent**
Hansen

(10) **Patent No.:** **US PP26,431 P2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Feb. 23, 2016**

(54) **MONARDA PLANT NAMED ‘LEADING LADY LILAC’**

(50) Latin Name: *Monarda didyma*×*Monarda bradburiana*
Varietal Denomination: **Leading Lady Lilac**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 111 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/120,589**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 6, 2014**

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A01H 5/02 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **Plt./455**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
USPC Plt./455
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The new and distinct cultivar of ornamental cultivar of hybrid ornamental bee balm named *Monarda* ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ has slightly-glossy, powdery mildew-tolerant foliage, flower heads of light lilac-purple flowers with lower petals accented by dark red-purple spotting, each head subtended by red-purple bracts. Flowering begins two weeks earlier than *Monarda didyma* cultivars and extends with fresh appearance over a long period due to lateral flower branches that develop above the terminal branches. The plant is short, compact and winter-hardy.

1 Drawing Sheet

1

BOTANICAL DESIGNATION AND CULTIVAR DENOMINATION

Botanical classification: *Monarda didyma*×*Monarda bradburiana*.
Variety denomination: ‘Leading Lady Lilac’.

FEDERAL SPONSORSHIP AND FUNDING

This plant invention was developed without federally sponsored research or development funding.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the new and distinct cultivar of Bee balm, botanically known as *Monarda* ‘Leading Lady Lilac’, and hereinafter also referred to solely as the cultivar ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ or the “new plant.” *Monarda* ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ was hybridized in the summer of 2009 at a wholesale perennial nursery in Zeeland, Mich., USA by the inventor and given the original breeder code of H9-38-01. The new plant was separated out for further evaluation in the summer of 2010 in the full sun trial gardens of the same nursery in Zeeland, Mich., as a planned breeding program to produce new colored Bee balm flowers with superior mildew resistance, new and improved flowers and compact habit. The new plant has been asexually propagated since 2011 by stem cuttings at the same nursery in the greenhouses in Zeeland, Mich., and the subsequent generations of asexually propagated plants found to be stable and identical to the original selection.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PLANT

Monarda ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ is unique from its parents and all other Bee balm plants known to the inventor. The nearest comparison cultivars are a sibling, *Monarda* ‘Leading

2

Lady Plum’ (co-pending U.S. Plant patent application Ser. No. 14/120,592) and the two parents, *Monarda* ‘Coral Reef’ U.S. Plant Pat. No. 16,741 and a proprietary selection of *Monarda bradburiana* (not patented). *Monarda* ‘Coral Reef’ is much taller and has a more pinkish-colored flower without spotting than the shorter in habit and more lilac-colored and spotted flower of the new plant. The selection of *Monarda bradburiana* has similar darker reddish-purple accent spots in the flower like that of *Monarda* ‘Leading Lady Lilac’, but it is lighter in background petal color and is more spreading and taller in habit than the new plant. The habit and spotted petals of ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ is most similar to its sister sibling ‘Leading Lady Plum’ except the flower color of ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ is more light lilac based and the flower color of ‘Leading Lady Plum’ is more magenta-purple. Both *Monarda* ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ and *Monarda* ‘Leading Lady Plum’ flower about two weeks earlier in trials in Michigan and North Carolina than all other *Monarda didyma* cultivars tested and have flowering side branches that develop above the terminal branch effectively extending the fresh flowering appearance of the new plant.

The new plant *Monarda* ‘Leading Lady Lilac’ is distinct from all bee balm plants known to the inventor. Table 1 compares two main traits of several of the nearest comparison cultivars with corresponding U.S. Plant Patent numbers listed where relevant.

TABLE 1

CULTIVAR	HEIGHT	FLOWER COLOR
‘Achall’ U.S. Plant Pat. No. 19,582	45	cm deep red-purple
‘Acrade’ U.S. Plant Pat. No. 19,580	40	cm purple violet
<i>M. bradburiana</i> ‘Coral Reef’	45 125	cm light lavender with dark spots cm coral pink

TABLE 1-continued

CULTIVAR	HEIGHT	FLOWER COLOR
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 16,741 'Fire Marshall'	50	cm deep red
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 23,286 'Fireball'	60	cm red-purple
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 14,235 'Leading Lady Lilac'	32	cm light lilac purple with dark spots
'Leading Lady Plum'	34	cm magenta purple with dark spots
'MCMum'	60	cm pink
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 22,136 'Mondid 0803'	40	cm red-purple
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 17,513 'Pardon My Pink'	28	cm fuchsia-pink
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 24,244 'Pardon My Purple'	30	cm dark fuchsia
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 22,170 'Petite Delight'	30	cm light pink-purple
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 10,784 'Petite Wonder'	25	cm light pink
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 13,149 'Pink Lace'	45	cm red-purple
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 18,367 'Pink Supreme'	60	cm dark pink
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 14,204 'Sugar Lace'	44.5	cm red-purple
U.S. Plant Pat. No. 22,918		

The following are traits of *Monarda* 'Leading Lady Lilac' that in combination distinguish it from all other Bee balm known to the inventor:

1. Dark-green, slightly-glossy, powdery mildew-tolerant foliage.
2. Short, compact, clumping, winter-hardy habit.
3. Compact, light lilac-purple flowers for a long period beginning late spring, at least two weeks earlier than most *Monarda didyma* cultivars.
4. Inside of lower flower petals accented by rows of darker reddish-purple spots.
5. Flowers in dense verticillasters subtended by purplish tinted bracts.
6. Lateral flowering branches extend above terminal flowers extending the fresh appearance.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The photographs of the new plant demonstrate the unique traits of *Monarda* 'Leading Lady Lilac' and the overall appearance of the plant at two-years old in the full sun trial garden of a nursery in Zeeland, Mich. The colors are as accurate as reasonably possible with color reproductions. Variation in ambient light spectrum, source and direction may cause the appearance of minor variation in color.

- FIG. 1 shows a close-up of the flower of the new plant.
FIG. 2 shows the habit of the new plant in flower.

DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

The following descriptions and color references are based on the 2001 edition of The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart except where common dictionary terms are used. *Monarda* 'Leading Lady Lilac' has not been observed under all possible environments. The phenotype may vary slightly with different growing environments such as temperature, light, fertility, soil pH, moisture and maturity levels, but without any change in the genotype. The following observations and size descriptions are based on two-year old full-sun, trial garden-grown plants at a nursery in Zeeland, Mich. with limited supplemental fertilizer and water as needed but

without plant growth regulators or pinching. Where significant differences occur characteristics compared with two-year old greenhouse forced plants with supplemental lighting, fertilizer and water.

- 5 Botanical classification: *Monarda didyma*×*Monarda bradburiana*.
Parentage: Female (seed) parent is *Monarda didyma* 'Coral Reef' U.S. Plant Pat. No. 16,741; male (pollen) parent is a proprietary selection of *Monarda bradburiana* (not patented).
10 Plant habit: Hardy herbaceous perennial, compact, producing multiple stems spreading by short rhizomes near the base of the stems; 26 to 32 cm tall at flowering and 56 to 66 cm wide; flowering begins late spring in Michigan and continuing for about 5 to 9 weeks.
15 Propagation: Stem cuttings.
Time to produce finished crop in 3.8 liter pots: About 7 to 9 weeks; moderate rate of growth.
20 Root: Fine, fibrous and freely branching; color creamy white to tan depending on soil type.
Leaves: Simple, lanceolate, opposite, serrated, puberulent above and below; lustrous above, semi-lustrous to matte below; acute apex, ovate to rounded base; about 4.5 to 7.5 cm long by 3.0 to 3.5 cm wide, average about 7.0 cm long and 3.2 cm wide.
25 Leaf color: Young leaves nearest RHS 137C above, between RHS 146B and RHS 138B below; older leaves between RHS 139A and RHS 137A above and between RHS 138A and RHS 138B below; greenhouse forced foliage of older leaves nearest RHS 136A above and between RHS 138A and RHS 138B below.
30 Foliage fragrance: Pleasant lemony.
Veins: Pinnate; pubescent below with minute puberulent above, slightly sunken above and raised below.
35 Vein color: Above midrib nearest RHS 138C, center portion of lateral veins nearest RHS 135A above with distal vein portion nearest RHS 137A; underneath midrib between RHS 147C and RHS 147D with lateral veins nearest RHS 147C blending to between RHS 146B and RHS 138B on perimeter.
40 Petiole: Pubescent, slightly concaved above, about 7.0 mm long and 2.0 mm across at base.
Petiole color: Nearest RHS 144A above and underneath.
45 Stems: Squared, puberulent, densely pubescent at nodes; about 4.0 mm across at base; about 30 per plant; naturally branched at upper nodes; average 1.7 cm between nodes greater distally; 15 to 18 nodes per stem; average length about 28 cm.
50 Stem color: Between RHS 146B and RHS 146C.
Flowers: Single labiate flowers arranged in mostly terminal verticillasters forming globular head about 7.0 cm across and 4.0 cm tall opening from the center and progressing outwardly and down; individual flowers persisting about 5 days in Michigan; numerous, about 200 flowers per terminal head, fewer per axillary head.
55 Flower fragrance: Moderately spicy.
Buds one to two days prior to opening: Narrowly oblanceolate, curved downward; about 2.2 cm long and 3 mm diameter; nearest RHS 76C in distal one third with a lighter base of white, lighter than RHS N155D or RHS 155D; younger bud color when just protruding beyond sepals apex nearest RHS N155D.
60 Petals: Labiate; arched downward; base fused into tube; split in two in the distal 1.2 cm with upper lip fused into a hood about 3.0 cm long and 2.5 mm diameter, apex curved

backward and fringed to densely pubescent; lower lip about 3.5 cm long comprising three lobes including two side lobes about 1.0 mm long with rounded apex and center lobe about 4.0 to 5.0 mm long split in the distal 1.0 mm; both petals glandular and pubescent on outer surfaces with fine hairs the same color as petals; both petals glabrous on inner surfaces; self-cleaning.

Petal color: Distal color of upper petal on both surfaces between RHS 84C and RHS 76C with basal 5.0 mm white, lighter than RHS 155D or RHS N155D; lower petal adaxial surface margins nearest RHS 76D with two lighter longitudinal ribs lighter than RHS 76D and longitudinal strips of nearest RHS 76C running between ribs and spots in the strips between the ribs about 0.5 mm diameter of nearest RHS N79B; lower petal abaxial surface nearest RHS 76D.

Filaments: Two, curved downward, about 1.4 cm long by 0.5 mm diameter fused to petal about 1.4 cm from base; color lighter than RHS 76D.

Anther: Oblong elliptic, dorsifixed, longitudinal; 2.2 mm by 1.0 mm; color nearest RHS 185A with longitudinal dehiscence line nearest RHS 187A.

Pollen: Abundant, elliptic to globose, less than 0.1 mm; color between RHS 14A and RHS 14B.

Pistil: One per flower; protruding about 7.0 mm beyond upper petal when mature.

Style: About 3.8 cm long and less than 0.5 mm diameter; color nearest RHS N80B distally and near white lighter than RHS 155D.

Stigma: Split in two in the distal 2.0 mm, 0.25 mm in diameter; color nearest RHS 76C.

Ovary: 1.0 mm by 0.75 mm; color between RHS 143D and RHS 144B.

Sepals: Five, apiculate apex, base fused forming corolla about 10.0 mm long and 2.0 mm diameter, fused in basal 8.0 mm to form a tube; glandular and with minute hairs on outer surface and especially at fusion opening; persistent.

Sepal color: Apex nearest RHS 137A both adaxial and abaxial; distal two thirds of outer corolla surface nearest RHS 139C with darker veins of RHS 138A; proximal half

of outer corolla surface becoming lighter than RHS 145D without stripes; inner surfaces same color as outer.

Foliar bracts: Usually two rows of six each in number; below verticillasters; lanceolate upper row and ovate to deltoid lower row; apex acuminate to acute; base sessile, truncate; lower row of bracts about 2.8 cm long and 1.8 cm wide at base; upper row of bracts, about 14 mm long and 3.5 mm wide.

Foliar bract color: Color of both rows similar, apex adaxial and abaxial variable between RHS 61A and RHS 187D with undertones of RHS 146C; base nearest RHS 145A, adaxial tinted more, abaxial surface tinted less with nearest RHS 184B.

Peduncle: Pubescent, stiff, strong, erect, squared in cross-section to about 0.4 cm across and average 28 cm long; about 30 per plant; naturally branched at nodes; average 1.7 cm between nodes; 15 to 18 nodes per stem.

Peduncle color: Between RHS 146B and RHS 146C.

Pedicel: About 1.0 mm long and 0.5 mm diameter; color nearest RHS 145B.

Fruit: Single nutlet, elliptical, about 1.3 mm long and 0.7 mm wide; color nearest RHS 200C.

Hardiness: The new plant grows best with plenty of moisture and adequate drainage; hardy to at least from USDA zone 4 through 8.

Disease and pest resistance: Demonstrated greater than average powdery mildew tolerance in side by side comparison with other *Monarda*.

I claim:

1. A new and distinct cultivar of hybrid ornamental Bee balm plant, *Monarda* 'Leading Lady Lilac', as herein described and illustrated, dark green foliage, slightly-glossy, powdery mildew-tolerant foliage; early-flowering light lilac-purple flowers with darker accent spotting over a long period beginning late spring; short, compact, winter-hardy habit; and especially suitable as a potted plant, for the garden, patio, and for cut flower arrangements.

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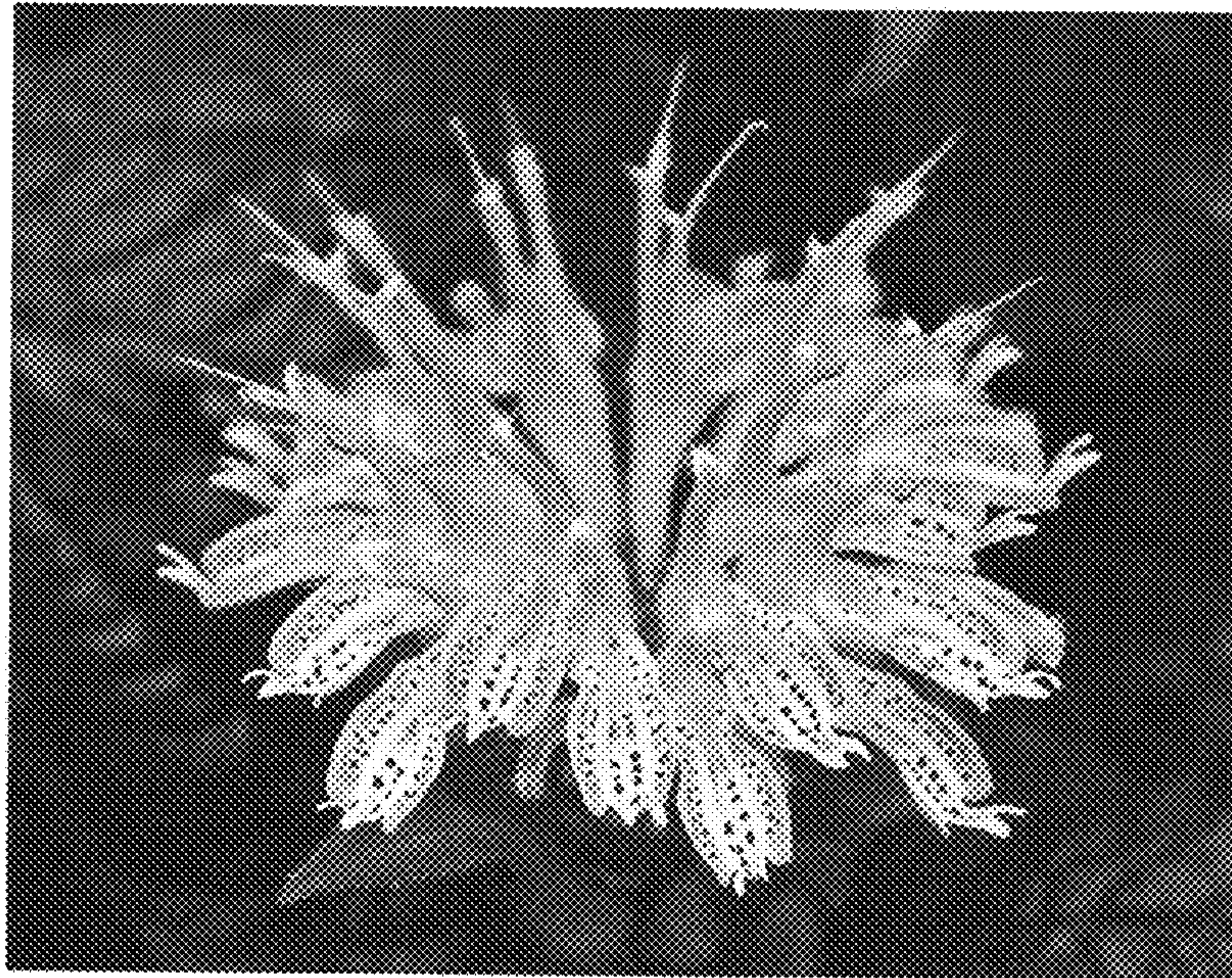


FIG. 1



FIG. 2