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Pieris floribunda

[Synonyms : *Andromeda floribunda*, *Portuna floribunda*]

FETTERBUSH is an evergreen shrub. Native to south-eastern North America it has small strongly fragrant, creamy-white flowers.

It is also known as Arctic heather, Mountain andromeda, Mountain fetterbush, Mountain pearlflower, and Mountain pieris.

Warning – the leaves and nectar are poisonous if consumed and may cause tingling feelings, watering nose and eyes, salivation, nausea, vomiting, sweating, abdominal pain, headache, weakness, convulsions and even death.

Fetterbush has been declared a threatened species in the state of Tennessee (United States).

Floribunda means ‘profusely or freely flowering’.

The name Fetterbush arose because the shrub can get under foot as it is dense low and twiggy.

Some authorities believe that John Fraser (1750-1811), a Scottish plant collector who crossed the Atlantic many times and explored the southern Appalachian Mountains in the late 18th Century, should be given the credit for finding this species and introducing it to Britain. [He started off with a draper’s business in London near the Chelsea Physick Garden but gave this up to become a plant collector and was responsible for introducing some shrubs that are still popular in Britain at the beginning of the 21st Century.]

However other authorities point out that his compatriot, John Lyon, also a plant collector, discovered fetterbush on Pilot Mountain in North Carolina in 1807 (a different place to Fraser’s find) and contend that he should be given the honour for its introduction to Britain. The time when these two men were plant collecting independently in the same region overlaps and there certainly seems to be continuing debate with regard to the correctly attributed discovery of this and other plants. At least one authority indicates suspicions that some of Lyon’s first introductions were in many instances wrongly ascribed – and there are authorities who infer that Lyon had no love for plants (apparently he limits records of his journeys to distances covered and costs incurred) and approached the collection of new species aggressively (some were sent back to Europe in excessive quantities) and primarily for commercial gain.

Fetterbush is cultivated as an ornamental plant.