

The Discovery of *Calochortus tiburonensis*

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In June, 1971, while walking on a serpentine ridge overlooking the Tiburon peninsula just across the Golden Gate to the north of San Francisco, I was pleasantly surprised to come across a calochortus that was new to me. Its long bronze leaves although knee-high were not easily seen among the dry grass. The flowers, campanulate and erect, were yellow-green and partly covered with fine hairs — they might have been designed for camouflage in such a place. Alerted by the first, I found them in abundance, many with two and three flowers.

No such plant was listed among the five calochortuses in Howell's *Marin Flora*, nor did I find it among the thirty-seven in Munz's *A California Flora*.

By chance I showed the few photographs I had taken to Florence Youngberg of Ross who mentioned the calochortus to Annetta Carter, a Research Associate at the University of California Herbarium in Berkeley. By this means the unusual calochortus came to the notice of Albert Hill at the U.C. Botanic Garden who was interested in the genus. It was he who introduced it to the botanical world in the pages of *Madroño* (vol 22, pp. 100-104, 1973), naming it as a new species, *Calochortus tiburonensis*.



Calochortus tiburonensis, photograph by the author. At left, a flower from another plant photographed by Steve Lowens.

Hill pointed out that the plant is unique in possessing features common to two of the three sections into which the genus is divided. The persistent basal leaves are characteristic of the section *Cyclobothra* while the glandular area of the petals and the seeds are typical of the section *Calochortus*. The combination of characters in the new species raises questions about classification within the genus.

The penultimate paragraph of Hill's article in *Madroño* emphasizes the significance of

this discovery to those concerned with conservation. "That a previously uncollected new species, and one of potentially great significance in interpreting relationships within the genus, was discovered in such a botanically well known area suggests the need for a very careful look at any areas that are threatened by development or other disturbance, especially near expanding population centers. Had this species not been noticed soon, it might well have become extinct without ever having been recorded." ♀