The mere thought of parrots mingled with plants strikes fear in the heart of the horticulturist. This need not be, as some parrot species can indeed be housed among the leaves and flowers. You certainly wouldn't want your macaw in a planted flight, unless it's planted with mature oak trees! On the other hand, lories and plants generally get along fine together. We have some softbills that cause more damage to the plants than do the lorikeets; mousebirds for example will even eat the weeds!

We have tried some of the larger lories along with our softbills and plants, but they seem to intimidate many of the quieter birds. Of course, Chattering Lories do far worse than intimidate! Our only attempt with Chatterings in a mixed aviary led to the rapid mutilation of other birds, as well as chewed off branches on ferns and plants. This was long ago, and we have learned the lesson well. Chattering are always housed alone.

Some of the smaller lories have
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worked out well in planted flights. We bred Meyer’s Lorikeets as well as Stella’s in this mixed softbill, planted flight. Goldie’s Lorikeets did fine but refused to breed. Even a previously proven pair never laid an egg in the mixed aviary. As soon as they were moved into a cage, they went right back to nest. This was also the case with this species at Pittsburgh Aviary several years ago according to Dr. Lindsay Clack.

Some of the softbill species that shared this particular aviary, which was about 350 square feet, 10 feet high, were: White-cheeked Turacos, Bali Mynahs, Black-spotted Barbets, and Spur-winged Plovers, all of which bred in this environment. Other inhabitants that did not breed successfully were Gold-fronted Chloropsis, Fulvus-breasted Woodpeckers, Black-headed Sibias, Pekin Robins, and Jambou Fruit Doves. The Meyer’s Lorikeets were almost non-stop breeders in this flight. The Stella’s, which were not in there at the same time as the Meyer’s, raised young, less successfully. Both species had access to a variety of nest sites, from wooden nest boxes to hollow logs, but chose wooden boxes about 9 in. square and 18 in. deep.

Since the planted aviaries were intended mainly for softbills, which generally have a different diet than lories, it was interesting that the lories consumed large amounts of softbill diet, with a particular fondness for mealworms. Also of interest was the number of softbills that relished the lory nectar. I never thought of woodpeckers as nectavors but they sure went through it! When the Meyer’s Lorikeets were rearing young, which was most of the time, they were the first birds on the mealtworms, driving off even the more aggressive barbets.

In the wild, some species of loriets, such as the Fairy, nest in bromeliads. In captivity they maintain a very wet nest, necessitating changing shavings every couple of days when chicks are present.

I intend to introduce a pair of Fairies to a planted flight that will contain several types of bromeliads and plants, such as stag horn fern, among others, just to see if they will nest outside of a nest box. I have an aviary now with a large stag horn in it, but the occupants, a pair of double-eyed fig parrots, seem bent on destroying it! They have chewed through fronds that are 4 ft. long, apparently just for fun, as they are nesting in a small boot box hung high in the flight. This may turn out to be true with the Fairy Lorikeets as well. Rosemary Low in her Lorises and Lorikeets mentions a pair of Fairies in her care that demolished a small tree in their flight, although a friend with the same species in a large, planted, softbill flight suffered no damage.

Lorikeets will take advantage of any flowering plants. We have cape honeysuckle growing over several of our flights; the reachable flowers are quickly devoured. Grapes which have seeded themselves from the lory food falling through are left alone by most of the smaller species, while Chalcoglossus and Chalcopsitta leave nothing within reach. Red Flanks, however, do not seem to touch greenery.

If you do intend to house loriets in a planted environment, pay special attention to the plants that you use. While you can plant most anything in a flight intended for softbills, some can be toxic to chewing birds, such as loriets. If you have the space, one of the best ways to enjoy these wonderful little parrots is in a planted aviary. It is especially enjoyable when they bathe in the leaves wet from rain. Try adding some “feathered flowers” to your garden!

“Aviculturally Speaking”

“Some of my lories perversely refuse to sample the apple offered, yet enjoy eating the apples that fall onto the roof of their aviary from the trees above. I should add that these are cooking apples! As lories are fond of eating the leaves which fall onto the roof of their aviary, they can be taught to eat other green food such as lettuce by placing it on the roof.”

Rosemary Low

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SCHEDULE FOR AFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Mark these dates and plan to attend
November 9, 10, 11, 12
(Thursday evening-Sunday noon)
Phoenix, Arizona Area

Board members call the office to confirm dates and location.

*Position open — contact regional vice president if interested
*Indicated 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.