The species is named in honour of the Edwardian artist, Marianne Mason and her brother Edward Mason, of St Bede’s College in Umtata, who collected the species in 1911. Plants were cultivated at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden the following year from corms brought to Britain by Marianne Mason. This original introduction did not thrive, however, and the species appears to have first been used for hybridization only in the latter half of the twentieth century. Until then the cultivated montbretias (an earlier name for Crocosmia) were derived from complex hybrids between three other species, *C. aurea*, *C. pottsii* and *C. paniculata*.

The genus *Crocosmia*, comprising eight species, is concentrated in eastern South Africa, where six of the species occur, with another endemic to Madagascar. The genus is largely found in temperate and subtropical climates, with just *C. aurea* extending into tropical Africa. Curiously, one species, *C. fucata*, is restricted to a single mountain massif in winter rainfall Namaqualand, far to the west.

Of the species, only *C. aurea* is cultivated to any extent, and the hybrid between it and *C. paniculata*, known as *C. ×crocosmiiflora*, is widely naturalized throughout the warmer, humid tropical and subtropical parts of the world. It has even achieved the status of a weed in some places. Several other hybrids with *C. paniculata* are popular in British gardens, some involving *C. masoniorum*.

The showy flowers of *C. masoniorum* are possibly pollinated by swallowtail butterflies but this has not been observed. The widely funnel-shaped flowers with their conspicuous stamens are ideally adapted to attract these large insects, and similar-shaped flowers elsewhere in South Africa are known to be pollinated by them.

None of the *Crocosmia* species appear to feature in traditional medicine but are important horticulturally. *C. masoniorum* was crossed with *C. paniculata* in the second half of the twentieth century by the British gardener Alan Bloom to produce the hybrid 'Lucifer', which is still one of the most popular of all the crocosmia hybrids. Since then many others have been raised but the genus is still mainly popular in Britain.
The elegant and showy flower spikes of *Crocosmia masoniorum* make it an ideal companion plant at the edges of herbaceous borders, where they are allowed to arch over lower plants. The bright orange of the wild plants is a brilliant foil for both dark purple and red flowers or foliage, and also for silver foliage. A yellow-flowered form, 'Rowallane Yellow' and an apricot one, 'Rowallane Apricot', are also available.

Plants require full sun to perform at their best and prefer well-drained but moisture-retentive soil, enriched with organic matter. Plants should not be disturbed for several years or until they begin to perform poorly. Certainly it appears that corms derive some nutrition from the persistent corms of previous years and these should therefore not be broken off. Plants can be propagated by division of established clumps in spring or by seed.

*C. masoniorum* has been reported to be susceptible to excessive damp in winter but thrives in my garden in Cape Town, where the winters are cool and moist. However, it is planted in a thick herbaceous border which may prevent the soil from becoming waterlogged for extended periods. Adequate moisture in summer is necessary for good flowering and in dry conditions the flowers may abort and the leaves become infested with red spider mite. In the winter the corms should be kept slightly moist and not allowed to dry out.