

## Akebia trifoliata – Three Leaved Akebia

*Akebia trifoliata*, commonly known as Three-leaf Akebia is a deciduous, twining, woody vine that is found naturally in China, Japan and Korea. It can rapidly grow from 6 to 10m in height as a climber or can be used as a groundcover. It produces compound palmate leaves, each with three elliptic to oblong-obovate leaflets to 10cm long which are dark green above and glaucous below.

Small, fragrant, chocolate-purple flowers bloom in drooping axillary racemes in spring. Flowers give way to interesting sausage shaped, pinkish-violet fruit pods, 10 to 12 cm long, which split open in fall to reveal small black seeds imbedded in edible whitish pulp. The soft young shoots are used for salads or for salt pickling. It is prized for basket making.

Three-leaf Akebia is a beautiful, fast growing vine that thrives with little care. It can grow upright on a structure or along the ground as a groundcover. It is evergreen in warmer areas, and deciduous in colder climates where the temperatures drop below zero. It is frost hard and can take a range of well-drained soils.

### Propagation

Akebia are cold climate plants and even germination is promoted by a period of cold treatment prior to sowing (stratification). Soak the seed overnight. Place the seed in a sandy mixture in a zip lock bag. The sand should be kept lightly moist. Place the seed in the refrigerator preferably so that it is kept at about 5°C. Leave it there for 30 days. Check to maintain the sand in a lightly moist state. Remove any seed that germinate and sow immediately. At the end of 30 days sow the remaining seed.

After stratification surface sow the seeds in a good well-draining seed mix in a small pot or seedling tray. Keep the soil lightly moist. Seed germinates happily at a temperature of say 18°C, a range from 16 to 20°C. Germination within 30 to 60 days.