

Chionanthus retusus – Chinese Fringe

Chinese Fringe Tree is a deciduous tree native to China, Korea and Japan that grows from 5 to 8m in height and half that in width.

It has a spreading, rounded shape and is usually multi-stemmed. The exfoliating bark is grey-brown. Leaves are opposite, leathery, lustrous green and from 7 to 20cm in length. In the autumn they change to an attractive yellowish green.

Summer blooming, it has pure white flowers clustered in 8 cm long panicles borne at terminal stem tips.

The female trees produce blue "olive-like" fruit after flowering. The fruit is attractive to birds.

It is a useful tree for urban locations as it is smog tolerant. Chinese fringe tree is a long living tree that adds character and charm to any landscape. It is very frost hardy and very drought resistant once established. Best suited to a position in full sun to partial shade in moist, deep, acidic soils that are well-drained.

Propagation is from seed that benefits from a period of warmth and then cold treatment or stratification. To stratify seed mix it with a quantity of lightly damp clean sand, place it in a sealable plastic bag and place it in the crisper of your refrigerator for 6 - 8 weeks. This is to convince the seed it has been through a northern hemisphere winter. After stratification, proceed as normal.

Sow your seed in a good quality potting mix. Place the seed in the medium to the depth of its length. Cover and water in. Maintain the media in a lightly moist but not damp condition. Place the seed container in a warm shady spot.

Once germination has occurred prick out the seedlings into separate tubes or containers after it has its second true leaf. Pot individual seedlings into separate tubes or pots and grow on as desired.

Plant out after the danger of frost has passed.

Guard your seedlings against slugs and snails.