

Stenocarpus sinuatus – Queensland Firewheel Tree

Stenocarpus sinuatus is another member of Australia's Proteaceae family. The red flowers are arranged in wheel-like umbels approximately 10 cm in diameter, hence their common name. The flowers are usually borne on older wood inside the outer foliage, so that it is much more attractive close up. Its flowering period is Summer to Autumn. It is a handsome rainforest tree, originating in coastal rainforests from northern New South Wales to northern Queensland (and Papua New Guinea), where the main rainfall is in Summer. It is an upright tree, prized for its cabinet timber, normally to 10m but which can reach 30m in its natural environment. Growth can often be slow in its early years, although ample summer water and fertiliser can overcome this. The dark green glossy leaves can vary from entire to deeply pinnately lobed (divided), and it is often grown as an indoor plant when young. It has been in cultivation as an outdoor tree for many years in the Scilly Isles and the USA among other countries around the world and is hardy enough to be planted as a street tree in some places.

Propagation

Propagate in any good medium potting mix.

Seed does not require any pre-treatment.

Sow your seeds at any time after the danger of frost has passed and when you can provide a daytime temperature of 20C to 24°C.

Sow seed vertically with the thicker end down and the seed inserted to about half to two thirds of its length.

Stenocarpus seeds are brittle and can collapse easily but this is usually the papery wing leaving the seed knob left in the frame. To sow, use something like a spoon handle to make a hole and then slide the seed in.

After sowing moisten your medium by watering from below. Initially you should water quite heavily to wet the seed in its medium, then to a lesser extent keeping the medium lightly moist - so that if you squeezed it in your hand it would yield a few drops.

Stenocarpus can be grown as an indoor plant and this is frequently a good way to establish it, planting it out in its final site once it is well established as young tree of say a foot or more. By propagating it in this manner it is often easier to increase the growth rate in the early years. Plant out in its final site in full sun in spring after the danger of frost has passed. Be sure to allow sufficient room for future growth when you choose your final site.