

Chorizema species

Chorizema cordatum

Chorizema diversifolium

Chorizema illicifolium

Chorizema rhombeum

In cultivation Chorizema grows best in a well-drained, sandy soil with some shade. When given these conditions the species will form a slender, often scrambling shrub to 80cm high and 1.5m wide with thin, weak branches. Satisfactory growth has also been recorded on heavier clay soils. When planted in a shaded position, flower colours are deeper. Different forms of the species are available, including a yellow-flowered form. Some of the forms of Chorizema cordatum in cultivation may be hybrids with the closely related *C. illicifolium*.

Although somewhat larger than other rockery plants *C. cordatum* could have a prominent position in a shadier corner. Its scrambling habit allows the plant to be trained or trailed over rocks or other features. Outside the rockery the plant forms a spectacular understorey shrub.

Propagation

Best achieved from pre-treated seed sown in spring or autumn in frost-free areas. Pre-treatment is by scarification which is the most common pre-treatment method and is used with seeds such as Senna, Acacia and all of the 'Pea' family in which the hard seed coat forms a physical barrier which is impervious to water. These plants are often native to areas where bushfires occur at regular intervals - the heat of the fire cracks the hard coat and allows moisture to reach the embryo inside.

Pouring boiling water over the seeds simulates this effect. The seeds to be treated are placed in a container, covered with boiling water and allowed to stand overnight. Seeds that soften and swell to 1.5-2 times their original size can be sown; those that don't swell are retreated. In some cases, however, the seeds will not tolerate excessive time in boiling water and respond better to a one minute immersion in boiling water followed by cooling down.

Abrasion can be used as an alternative to boiling water. Seeds are abraded between two sheets of fairly fine sandpaper to reduce the thickness of the seed coat. This can be cumbersome, and an alternative is to glue sandpaper to the inside surfaces of a small plastic container, put the seeds in and then shake the container vigorously.

The seed retains viability for many years. Cuttings strike well using firm, current season's growth.

Some success has been recorded from cuttings of semi-hardened material. Little maintenance is necessary once they are planted out apart from a light tip pruning and removal of old wood after flowering. Because the plants are delicately surface rooted, mulching and supplementary watering are necessary for plants in exposed situations. In Canberra, the species is slightly frost tender and requires protection from severe frosts. Some overhead tree shelter is usually sufficient. Serious defoliation caused by caterpillars has been noted on occasions and these may be controlled by spraying with Dipel, a bio-insecticide specific to leaf eating caterpillars. No other pests or diseases have been observed; however, those who wish to collect seed will have to watch for seed-eating insects entering the small, soft, inflated pod before maturity.

