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Arbutus - Care Guide

Growing Arbutus – Strawberry Tree

Very few plants can be seen to have flowers and fruit on display at the same time but this evergreen genus does. The species which we grow have long pendant panicles of white flowers in autumn. At the same time the small spherical strawberry fruits from the previous year's flowers are beginning to turn from yellow to a ripe red providing an interesting combined display.

Arbutus x andrachnoides and Arbutus unedo originate in the southern Mediterranean while the rather rarer Arbutus menziesii comes from North America. In Cornwall these trees grow to around 20ft and one of their most notable features (fruits aside) is their rough shedding and peeling red brown bark. Arbutus andrachne perhaps has the most attractive cinnamon brown flaking bark as can be seen in the photographs below. The Canary Island species which are too tender to grow outside in the UK are even more spectacular.

Arbutus are very tolerant of windy coastal situations. They have ovate leaves which are glossy green. A. x andrachnoides leaves are glaucous underneath. Unusually these small trees, which grow well in rich well drained soil in sun, will also perform well in alkaline soils.

A. unedo is available in several forms. A. undedo 'Compacta' grows only to around 6ft in height. A. unedo 'Rubra' has attractive dark pink flowers rather than the more normal white and flowers well as a small plant in a pot.

While the strawberry fruits are edible on arbutus they are not very palatable and are best left on the tree as an ornamental feature.


Arbutus menziesii


Arbutus menziesii


Arbutus unedo


Arbutus unedo


A. unedo 'Compacta'


A. unedo 'Compacta'


A. unedo 'Rubra'


A. unedo 'Rubra'

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