

Cydonia - Growing Guide

Growing Cydonia Oblonga

Commonly known as 'Quince'

In maturity these trees or large rounded shrubs often cause experts to scratch their heads when they produce a profusion of white or pale pink flowers in April or May. Cydonia are attractive flowering trees in their own right before the large greenish yellow or pale green fruits in the autumn.

Unlike chaenomeles, which often have sharp thorns, cydonia are thornless and grow 15-20ft high with a spreading pendulous habit. The young branchlets are covered with greyish wool or indumentum. The leaves are ovate and elliptical, from 2-4in in length, dark green above and paler with a white felt beneath. The flowers appear singly at the end of short twigs and are 2in across. Quite enough to make a show!

Quinces are, however, grown as ornamental trees primarily for their fruits which are 3in long, pear shaped and fragrant. An acquired taste as far as scents go perhaps, but very distinct, and unmistakeably quince! Quinces have been grown for their edible fruits in Asia and around the Mediterranean from time immemorial. The fruits are harsh and bitter to taste but, in the UK, they are primarily used for jam making if you can get to collect the fruits in late September or October before they are infested with wasps. An elderly lady in Caerhays village comes to the garden each year to collect the fruits and returns a pot of greenish jam at Christmas.

C. oblonga 'Vranja' is, we find, the best fruiting variety for growing in the garden, in an orchard or beside the vegetable garden. The fruits are pale green ripening to golden yellow. Vranja is a place in Serbia so the hardiness is not in doubt!

Fertile, well drained, moist soil suits quinces. We find they need firm staking until a woody trunk is established. They will fruit best when grown in full sun.

We propagate quinces from hardwood cuttings in a cold frame taken over winter and set in a mixture of sand and compost. Seed can be sown in spring but you will need to extract it with gloves and a clothes peg from the ripe fruits. The smell is rather off putting!



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'Champion'



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