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Humulus - Growing Guide

Growing Humulus Lupus – Hop

The female inflorescences of hops are the essential ingredient for beer making and are still grown and farmed for this purpose in the UK in Sussex and Kent. Specific types of hops with specific flavours in different beers are sought by UK brewers from Germany and America. This alarmingly vigorous climbing and twining plant, which dies right down to ground level each winter, is widely grown in gardens for its ornamental value. It is effectively a rhizomatous herbaceous climber whose leaves and inflorescences can be dried in late summer to decorate harvest festivals and beer festivals. The scent of the dried foliage and flowers reminds us of the smell of brewing and beer. Just like visiting a brewery in full production in reality.

Humulus lupus emerges from the ground in spring with rough hairy shoots which can readily grow to 20ft given a telegraph pole, shrub or hedge to grow through. When farmed hops are grown on tall wire trellis systems so that the flowers hang down for commercial harvesting. In the garden it is quite straightforward to establish a trellis or wire system to assist the plant. The leaves are three or five lobed and coarsely teethed. The female flowers are borne in yellowish green trailing clusters of cones in late summer which enlarge in fruit. They turn straw coloured when ripe and are highly attractive.

Humulus lupus ‘Aureus’ is an attractive ornamental form with soft yellow leaves when cultivated in full sun. It looks fantastic trained over a metal pergola or a wooden tripod but, even then, you may well end up cutting back some of its thrusting shoots to contain it. Not perhaps a plant to risk growing on the side of your house like this!







Softwood cuttings root easily in spring. Seed will germinate well if sown later in a warm spring in the greenhouse. In the nursery these plans are hard to grow well and contain in their pots so ordering when dormant to plant in March or April is advisable.

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