

Melia azedarach - Growing Guide

Melia Growing Guide

Bead tree, Pride of India, Persian lilac

At Caerhays a Melia has developed into a spreading tree of around 15-20ft in height with a near equivalent spread over 30 years. It grows in full sun at the top of a hill so is therefore unlikely to feel much frost but it is extremely well protected by laurel hedges and other trees from westerly or easterly winds. Since this tree comes from northern India and China it is too tender to grow well in most parts of the country except in a conservatory unless you believe that our recent milder winters are here to stay.

M. azedarach is known as the Bead tree because the seeds were used by monks to form rosaries of beads. It is probably best attempted outside in the UK against a hot wall in full shelter. This large shrub or small tree has large elegant doubly pinnate leaves which are 12-24in long and produces a profusion of star shaped fragrant lilac flowers in early summer. So far we have only observed this once at Caerhays despite the reference books saying that M. azedarach flowers at a young age. Perhaps we have simply missed them. Anyway we have also yet to observe the ½in ovoid yellow fruits.

We have not so far tried propagation from softwood cuttings with bottom heat in summer but this certainly looks possible.



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