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Physalis franchettii - Growing Guide

Growing Physalis Franchettii

Ground Cherry

Physalis franchettii is one of the most popular plants for those who enjoy creating arrangements of dried flowers and seed heads. The stalks of ‘Chinese lanterns’ which this plant produces in late summer or early autumn contain bright red seeds but they are enclosed in large papery calyxes or bladders which start creamy white and then turn a bright orange red; papery when dry and first mature. They can then be cut and further dried while still retaining their colour. Left in a border they stand out spectacularly for some months.

In other respects this is a fairly invasive herbaceous plant in the border which is no bad thing if you want more lanterns. The solitary flowers are fairly tiny and insignificant. They appear around midsummer from the leaf axils. Overall P. franchettii grows to around 2ft or more and can well spread more widely than this.

Physalis alkenkengi var. franchettii (to give it its full botanic name) has a wide geographical spread in the wild across Europe and on into Asia. Handle this plant with care or gloves as its leaves can be a mild skin irritant. It follows that you should not eat any of it either as it will cause a stomach upset.

This is a fully frost hardy plant which goes fully dormant in the winter. It prefers full sun and the lanterns will colour better if it is but it will grow well in shade also. The plant is easily dug and divided in the border in spring or the seeds can be extracted from the lanterns and sown in a cold frame in the spring.

















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