

Rhaphithamnus spinosus - Growing Guide

Growing Rhaphithamnus Spinosus

These are myrtle-like evergreen shrubs with a dense habit and gorgeous blue flowers but rather less gorgeous needle like spines. A similar flower shape and habit to Desfontainea.

These plants are native to Chile and Argentina and were introduced to the UK in about 1843 by William Lobb. In the wild it may grow ultimately to perhaps 20ft in height but, in Cornwall, a slow growing 4-6ft tall shrub would seem to be the norm. If you treat the plant as you would a myrtle it is perfectly hardy. In practice this means avoiding exposed locations and especially those bringing cold winds from the north or east. It also means a sunny position with dappled shade and good well drained soil.

Each pair or cluster of leaves of small, sharply toothed leaves is accompanied by two or three needle like spines. The flowers are a striking light blue and appear in April singly or in pairs on the leaf axils of last summer's growth. They are tubular and ½in long and really quite a sight in the nursery as few similar sized plants of this sort produce blue flowers!

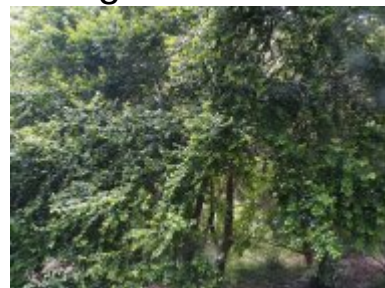
The fruits are of a similar size, rounded and also bright blue in autumn.



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