

Sophora - Growing Guide

Growing Sophora

The taxonomists have recently decided that the commonly grown *Sophora japonica* should now be renamed and given the unpronounceable name *Styphnolobium japonicum*. It is probably easier still to refer to it as the Japanese Pagoda Tree or *S. japonica* whose care and treatment is much in line with the other species of *sophora*.

Sophora are grown and admired for their elegant alternate pinnate leaves and racemes of pea shaped flowers of various colours.

The hardiest species and the easiest to get away with outside in warmer counties or in warmer city environments are *S. japonica* and *S. microphylla* 'Sun King'. They need full protection from cold north or east winds and are perhaps best grown alongside a warm sunny south facing wall. In the garden here we hide them away in a sunny glade to surprise spring garden visitors with Sun King's large clusters of dark yellow pea flowers which appear before the leaves. This is a semi evergreen small tree in our climate.

S. tetraptera has long drooping clusters of yellow flowers in late spring and should be trained onto a wall for best effect. *S. davidii* is smaller growing and deciduous with terminal racemes of purple-blue and white flowers in late May or early June.

S. davidii and *S. prostrata* grow to a more suitable size for the greenhouse or shrub border. They like high levels of humidity under glass to prevent leaf drop and are best potted on once a year with a gentle haircut to maintain their shape. If you let them get a little potbound they seem to flower better in the next season. Use a peaty compost with added grit for best results. *Sophora* will flower away in pots at a very young age.

S. microphylla is an evergreen New Zealand native as is *S. tetraptera*. *S. davidii* comes from China. *S. japonica* is perhaps the largest growing of these trees and shrubs. It is also deciduous and can readily withstand a bit of dieback after a cold winter. In maturity it has grey ash-like bark but it is green-brown and spotted in immaturity.



Sophora microphylla



Sophora microphylla



Sophora tetraptera



Sophora 'Little Baby'



Sophora microphylla 'Sun King'



Sophora microphylla 'Sun King'



Sophora microphylla 'Sun King'



Sophora davidii



Sophora pendula



Sophora pendula



Sophora seed pods



Sophora seed pods

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/Psb3Pn7sit0?start=260>

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