

Akebia - Care Guide

Growing Akebia – Chocolate Vine

Akebias have become some of the most popular climbing plants which we grow and there are several examples flowering away in spring on the walls of the main walled garden as well as on the front of Burncoose House itself.

Akebias look as though they are evergreen climbers but *Akebia trifoliata* is in fact deciduous. *Akebia quinata* is fully evergreen in milder climates, but can lose some or all of its leaves in an exposed position or after cold winds, with no lasting ill effect. It could even be argued that, when leafless, *A. quinata* shows off its spring flowers to best effect.

These plants originate from the forest margins in China and Japan. Both male and female flowers are borne separately in each raceme.

Akebia quinata has fragrant chocolate scented flowers which appear in March. The individual flowers are brownish-purple, a peculiar shape and quite eye catching. Perhaps the most popular form of all is *A. quinata* 'Alba' which has creamy white flowers with just a hint of pink and the fragrance of vanilla. The leaves are rounded and composed of five oblong leaflets.

Akebia trifoliata has 4in long leaves which have three broadly ovate leaves which are bronzy as they first open before turning a glossy dark green. The flowers are purple and borne in pendant racemes of about 4-5in in length in spring.

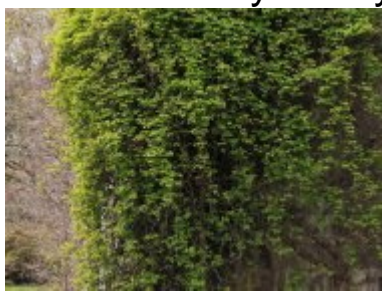
Akebia x pentaphylla is a cross between these two species with dark purple flowers.

Unless we enjoy a very hot summer following a mild spring it is unusual for our akebias to set seed. The fruits, when and if they occur, are quite

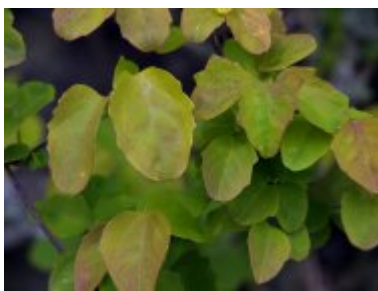
startling in comparison to the size of the flowers. In both species they are sausage shaped and turn dark purple (A. quinata) or pale violet (A. trifoliata) when ripe. The sausages can be 3-4in long and contain a white pulp within which the black seeds are embedded.

Both species of akebia will grow to 20-30ft in height if you let them. They have no aversion to a hard pruning and look wonderful in flower when trained over a pergola or on a wall. They can readily be allowed to romp up through another small tree or large shrub. Akebias grow well both in sun and partial shade but like a moist fertile soil.

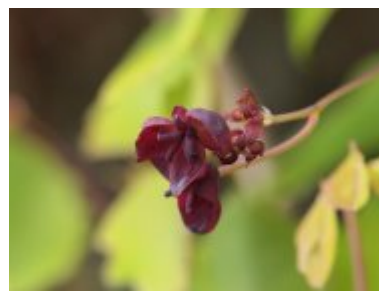
If you are lucky enough to produce seed set it in a container in the cold frame when ripe in autumn. Akebia are most easily propagated by semi ripe cuttings in summer but tendrils of new growth from the base of the plant can readily be layered as well.



Akebia quinata



Akebia quinata



Akebia quinata



Akebia quinata 'Alba'



Akebia quinata 'Alba'



Akebia trifoliata



Akebia trifoliata

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