

Boquila - Growing Guide

Growing Boquila Trifoliolata

This unusual rarity from Burncoose is a vigorous evergreen vine native to Chile and Argentina which has only recently been discovered and investigated by biologists.

Our original stock plant grows on a tall wall alongside an aged *Camellia japonica* and the new growth tendrils have become intertwined within the camellia. The remarkable characteristic of Boquila is that as the vine wraps around the host plant it starts to mimic the host's leaves in a phenomenon called mimetic polymorphism. While we cannot yet pretend that our stock plant has leaves which mimic the camellia it is certainly noticeable that the leaves are extremely variable in shape and form on the plant. Some leaves can be up to ten times larger than the smallest and they do vary in colour from very light to very dark.

The flowers on Boquila trifoliolata appear with us in late spring or summer in large clusters of small rounded flowers that are initially cream-white and becoming more yellowish. We have yet to see any white rounded fruits on our plant but these are said to be perfectly edible.

Quite what the purpose of this plant's ability to mimic the leaf form of its host remains somewhat uncertain. The mimicry may be an adaptation to thwart leaf herbivores or as a protection against ground herbivores. What makes this mimicry so exceptional is that it is not limited to a single host but encompasses multiple different hosts. Where it grows in the wild on shrubs with spine tipped leaves Boquila's leaves can also grow a spiny tip.

A genuinely interesting and exceptional plant which presents a good story that can be told to garden visitors.

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