

Camptotheca - Care Guide

Caring For Camptotheca

Chinese happy tree. Cancer tree.

At Caerhays we have been growing this very rare Chinese tree for around 15 years. It is now about 15ft tall and, although being at the top of a steep and well drained slope, it is not quite in full sun. *C. acuminata* is late into leaf and its wonderful pink then reddish new growth with red veining in the leaves is slow to appear; usually not until later in the early summer. In consequence the tree here is prone to fairly minor but still noticeable dieback from the tips each winter. Clearly it needs to be baked in full sun to harden off the new growth properly.

This attractive columnar and erect ornamental tree with silvery, pale brown bark, is of considerable interest in medical research in finding anti-cancer drugs from Camptothecins. Our plant has yet to flower but the pale green flowers appear from terminal heads and from side shoots and are unisexual. They appear in mid-summer.

This may well be one of those trees which is tender when young but much hardier when a mature woody trunk has developed. The recommendation for this new item in our catalogue may therefore be to grow it on and pot it on for a few years in a polytunnel and only plant out when it has achieved say 5-6ft in height.



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