

Chamaedaphne calyculata - Growing Guide

Growing Chamaedaphne Calyculata

Leatherleaf

This is a less well known genus of only one species which grows in the bogs of Europe and North America. It is closely related to Leucothoe but is very much smaller growing. Chamaedaphne is a small but compact evergreen, wiry shrub for a lime free soil. It has slender arching shoots and oblong, leathery, glossy dark green leaves which can be up to 2in long and are scaly underneath.

Not much to look at perhaps until it flowers in March or April. Then it produces a 'standout' display of small urn shaped white flowers in leafy arching (one sided) racemes at the end of each shoot. The racemes in a mature plant, which will be no more than 2-2½ft tall overall, can be up to 5in long and hence the impressive flowering performance which catches the eye in the nursery every spring and makes you wonder what this plant actually is. Despite its name the flowers have no appreciable scent.

Chamaedaphne are plants for acid soil in a peaty bed or in a woodland context in dappled shade. They will die quickly in hot conditions where they dry out as we find to our cost in the nursery if we forget to move them from a sunny hot tunnel in spring to a shady part of the nursery.

Propagation is by semi-ripe cuttings in June or July.



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