

Chionanthus - Growing Guide

Growing Chionanthus

Commonly known as 'Fringe Tree'

The two deciduous species which we offer are radically different but have one thing in common; their long peculiar fragrant flowers.

C. virginicus is of American origin and has often raised eyebrows on our Chelsea stands over the years. *C. retusus*, the Chinese Fringe Tree, flowers a little earlier in the year and has yet to hold in flower to late May for the show.



Chionanthus virginicus



Chionanthus virginicus

We grow *C. virginicus* in a woodland glade where it has grown quite slowly to about 10ft flowering every year. It has a 5-7ft spread. The flowers appear in late May or June with us when the tree is in full leaf. This is surprisingly still a fairly rare shrub or small tree in UK gardens but certainly causes surprise to visitors who have not seen it in its full beauty. The contrast between the glossy dark green leaves and the white flowers is magic!

C. retusus grows to a similar height but grows more as a spreading bush of twice the width. By judicious pruning at a young age you can encourage

a central trunk to form and grow this species also as a small tree. The leaves are bright green and soft white and hairy beneath. The flowers are in more erect panicles (than those of *C. virginicus* where they hang down) and the contrast between leaf and flower is perhaps less pronounced. Many serious gardeners are 'stumped' by this plant when in flower (with us) in March or April.



Chionanthus retusus



Chionanthus retusus



Chionanthus retusus



Chionanthus retusus

Propagation by cuttings has been a failure with us. Layering is a possibility on *C. retusus* where its branches touch the ground. Seed of the American species at least can be obtained from specialist seed companies. In this we have been rather more successful!