

Chordospartium - Care Guide

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Cord broom, Weeping broom

(Formerly *Carmichaelia stevensonii*)

Carmichaelia are broom-like shrubs many of which have peculiar flattened stems that do the work normally done by the leaves. They originate from New Zealand and can only be grown well in a baking hot, sunny, and well drained location.

Carmichaelia stevensonii has been stocked by Burncoose for the last few years. At Ventnor Botanic Gardens it thrives in a warm seaside setting and is a most impressive spectacle when in flower. At Ventnor it grows (exceptionally) as a multi stemmed upright bush of 10-12 feet in height. Its habit resembles that of a miniature weeping willow although it is a peculiar shrub with flattened stems. In June or July it produces wonderfully plentiful racemes of lavender pink (pea like) flowers. (they can look faintly bluish initially from a distance) over a long period of time.

Do not be alarmed if the feathered stems of young plants look lifeless and dead! They are not! This is simply how a young leafless plant of *C. stevensonii* looks at first. It will, in juvenility, eventually produce a few leaflets from the bare stems but these do not survive for long.

This is probably an unusual greenhouse plant away from coastal and warmer parts of the country but once established with a woody stem, *C. stevensonii* will tolerate moderate frost as it has in the nursery here. Shelter from cold easterly winds is however essential for younger plants. Growing against a hot wall is perhaps the best bet for this peculiar, but ultimately rewarding shrub.

Seed is best sown in the autumn or pre soaked in warm water before sowing in the spring. Cuttings can only realistically be taken from very young plants with more obvious new growth.



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