

Cotoneaster - Growing Guide

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There are so many different species of cotoneaster that it is difficult to provide you with common themes. Some are deciduous, some evergreen and some partway between the two. Some are decent sized trees, many are shrubs and quite a few species are groundcover plants. There is a recently published book on cotoneasters with a foreword by Roy Lancaster which shows pictures and describes well over a hundred different species and many more hybrids originating in Europe, Asia and North Africa. Seed from around 15 of the rarest forms in the wild has recently been grown by a nursery in Belgium and these have just been planted out at Caerhays to test them out.

Cotoneaster are not, in the main, grown for their cup shaped white (occasionally pink) flowers but, rather, for their spectacular autumn fruits which are normally rounded and red but can also be yellow or blue-black. All the species we grow are totally hardy and most will readily tolerate dry conditions in full sun. Most shrubby species respond well to occasional hard pruning so that the new growth will produce more berries. Although birds love the ripe berries do not eat them yourself unless you want a stomach upset.

Seed can be sown in containers as soon as ripe in the autumn. Deciduous species root well from cuttings in early summer. Evergreen species propagate better from cuttings taken later in the summer and most groundcover species will root as hardwood cuttings set in a frame in the ground in late autumn.

1. Groundcover species

C. dammeri – this species grows around 8in high but can spread over 6ft. The berries are spherical and red. Evergreen.

C. horizontalis – this is an evergreen groundcover species but it can also readily be grown up a wall with a bit of training. We also use it to cover steep banks to reduce weed growth in inaccessible areas. The flowers are pink tinged and the berries are red.

C. microphyllus – we have grown this plant at Caerhays for 100 years where it has expanded into a huge layering and spreading evergreen shrub 3-5ft tall with a spread of way beyond this. The fruit is a bit sparse and reddish-pink when ripe.

C. x suecicus ‘Skogholm’ – this is a very prostrate evergreen which also makes ideal groundcover on a steep bank. It can spread up to 10ft and is only around 2ft tall. The berries are bright red.

C. ‘Coral Beauty’ grows to only 3ft in height and has bright orange fruits.

2. Shrubby species

C. conspicuus is a dense mound forming evergreen growing up to around 5ft but with a greater spread. Shiny red fruit in profusion.

C. franchettii is an attractive erect growing shrub which can be evergreen or semi evergreen in colder winters. It grows to around 10ft with a smaller spread and the bright orange fruit is especially long lasting into spring if the birds leave it alone as they seem to do with us.

C. lacteus is a dense evergreen shrub which can readily be grown as a hedge. It will grow to around 12ft. The red fruits appear in large cymes or clusters rather than individually. The leaves have white-yellow felting on their undersides.



Cotoneaster franchettii



Cotoneaster hualiensis

C. 'Exburyensis' – this is a vigorous arching evergreen with pointed green leaves. The key feature of this variety is its large clusters of bright yellow fruits. Grows to 15ft with a similar spread.

C. 'Hybridus Pendulus', weeping cotoneaster. We offer this as a top grafted half standard tree with weeping branches that are clothed in bright red fruits.

C. 'Rothschildianus' – this is a good feature shrub in a woodland context with wide arching stems. We grow them in groups of three for winter effect. This is an evergreen with large cymes of pink tinged white flowers in early summer and spherical bright red fruits. Grows to 15ft in height.

C. frigidus 'Inchmery' is a large tree growing here to 20ft with a spreading conical habit. It has salmon-pink fruits in profusion which start off yellow. These have propagated well and we soon hope to be able to offer plants of this spectacular variety.



Cotoneaster frigidus
'Inchmery'

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