

Distylum racemosum - Growing Guide

Growing Distylum Racemosum

'Curious rather than beautiful' is how Bean describes this genus in his manual of Trees & Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles. This is an evergreen shrub from Japan which grows up to 6ft tall with, eventually, a wider overall spread. Its flowers resemble those of Parrotia or Sycopsis and are no great spectacle on an evergreen shrub.

D. racemosum has narrow oblong leathery and also glossy dark green leaves of 1-3in in length. The small flowers appear in the nursery in April or early May in tiny upright racemes. The flowers have no petals but are merely clusters of conspicuous purple stamens and red calyces.

Like many similar evergreens this plant propagates from autumn cuttings set on the mist bench over winter. We have yet to see any seed heads on our plants which grow perfectly well in shade. Botanists now think this may be the Japanese form of the Chinese *Sycopsis tutcheri* which is also evergreen with very similar flowers.

We have recently introduced *D. 'Blue Cascade'* which has blue green foliage and bronze coloured new shoots in a compact habit. The red-purple flowers contrast effectively with the leaves.