

## Luma / Myrtle - Growing Guide

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If you are confused by what we all once used to know as 'myrtles' then join the club. In their wisdom taxonomists have now split the old genus *Myrtus* into four separate genera: *Amomyrtus*, *Myrtus*, *Luma* and *Ugni*. To say the least, this has led to confusion over the naming of these fairly common and widely known plants.

Here we deal with *Luma apiculata* (formerly *Myrtus luma*) and *Luma chequen* (formerly *Myrtus chequen*). These are both species from Chile and Argentina.

In many of the milder and coastal parts of the UK and southern Ireland *Luma apiculata* has naturalised itself and seedlings appear wherever there is bare earth near a tree. In the March 2018 'Beast' we feared that the stands of this small tree would be killed by the cold easterly gales as they were in the 1963 winter and once since. However, this time, they almost all survived. Even if the older plants had not there are so many seedlings of varying sizes around them that the stands would have soon recovered.

*Luma apiculata* is also widely grown for its gorgeous peeling and splitting bark in maturity. At Tregothnan in Cornwall these trees are grown in an avenue for maximum effect. There is a huge multi-stemmed and branching tree at Burncoose just beyond the main walled garden which attracts attention from its cinnamon-brown bark formation even when not in flower. As its bark peels and splits creamy white patches appear.

*Luma apiculata* is a vigorous and quick growing shrub which soon develops into a small tree. It has cup shaped white flowers in profusion both singly and in clusters and the flowers persist from midsummer well into autumn. They are followed by rounded purple berries.

*Luma apiculata* 'Glenlean Gold' is a popular form with creamy-yellow margins to its leaves and a dense habit. In new plantings we often use a few of these as a windbreak to protect more tender plants as they grow in an open glade. *M. apiculata* 'Saint Hilary' is a chance sport with silver variegated green-cream leaves.

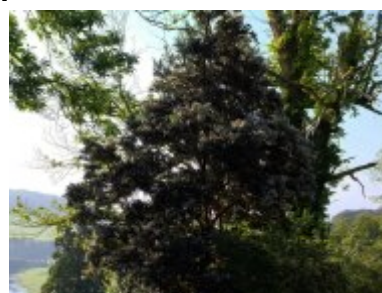
*Myrtus chequen*, the white Chilean myrtle, has a somewhat different habit. It is upright growing and develops into a large multi branched tall shrub rather than a small tree. The leaves are elliptic with a wavy margin and the white flowers are a little larger than *L. apiculata*. They appear from mid to late summer and are followed by black berries.



*Luma apiculata*



*Luma apiculata*



*Luma apiculata*



*Luma apiculata*



*Luma apiculata*  
'Glenlean Gold'



*Luma apiculata*  
'Glenlean Gold'



*Luma chequen*



*Luma chequen*



*Luma chequen*

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/pFlvz5FqnA8>

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**Burncoose Nurseries: Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ**

Telephone: +44 (0) 1209 860316 Fax: +44 (0) 1209 860011 Email: [info@burncoose.co.uk](mailto:info@burncoose.co.uk)

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