

Phyllocladus - Growing Guide

Growing *Phyllocladus Trichomanoides*

The phyllocladus which we grow and propagate are native to New Zealand and Tasmania. They are related to Podocarpaceae although this is not obvious on first sight. These are rare plants which are little known in cultivation but are perfectly hardy in warmer climates. There are notable specimens at Fota Arboretum and Mount Congreve in Eire and at the Savill Garden near Windsor. In Cornwall there are fine trees at Tregrehan and in the Abbey Gardens on Tresco.

Phyllocladus trichomanoides is an erect pyramidal tree with distinct smooth grey-black bark and whorled branches. The unusual feature that this genus exhibits is that it has two separate types of shoots. 'Normal' shoots produce scale like non-functioning leaves and flattened modified shoots that form leaf like photosynthesising elements called 'phylloclades' which look a bit like celery leaves. *P. trichomanoides* has phylloclades which are 12in long in more mature developed trees. These are reddish brown when young then mid to dark green. You are unlikely to see the male or female 'flowers' which are known as strobili until maturity. Sometimes male and female strobili appear on the same plant but, as far as the author has seen, this is seldom the case.

Phyllocladus trichomanoides var *alpinus* is however thriving and perfectly hardy at Caerhays in full sun and is certainly producing an attractive crop of male bright pinkish red strobili in April. This is a small erect and stunted plant known as the alpine celery-topped pine. It was given to us initially by Mount Congreve gardens and has propagated easily from semi ripe cuttings. The shrub has a dense display of small bluish-green cladodes up to an inch long as can be seen in the photographs below this article.

An unusual genus of peculiar plants which are well worth growing for their extraordinary lifestyle and habit.



PHYLLOCLADUS
trichomanoides



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trichomanoides alpinus



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