

## Pieris - Growing Guide

### Growing Pieris

Commonly known as 'Lily of the Valley Shrubs' This is a genus of seven evergreen woodland shrubs mainly originating from China although many new cultivars and forms have been bred in the UK in the last century.

Pieris enjoy exactly the same conditions as rhododendrons; an acidic and lime free soil enhanced and improved with peat or leaf mould. Their roots need moisture and they are best grown in dappled shade with wind protection to ensure that they produce the copious display of white flower trusses in March or April. Full sun is fine but there may be some scorching or discoloration of the new growth in a hot season.

Most varieties of *P. japonica* grow up to 8 or 10ft. *P. forrestii* will grow up to 15 or 20ft. Pieris have a dense compact and upright habit and lance shaped glossy green leaves. Pieris are worth growing for their coloured new growth even aside from the flowers. *P. forrestii* 'Forrest Flame' has the strongest bright red new growth which slowly turns pink. *P. japonica* 'Mountain Fire' has chestnut brown new growth while the dwarf growing *P. japonica* 'Little Heath' has white and green foliage contrasting with bright red new growth. *P. japonica* 'Katsura' has white new growth. Pieris all have terminal panicles of small urn shaped or globular flowers. The panicles in some forms can be 12-18in long with many strands of flowers in each panicle. Most forms have white flowers which can quite literally weigh down branches almost to the ground. Newer forms such as *P. japonica* 'Passion' and *P. japonica* 'Valley Valentine' have reddish purple flowers in a similar impressive display although these forms are more difficult to grow and, while breeding may have produced new flower colours, these need planting in groups as you will probably lose one or two before they mature.

Pieris are easily grown from seed sown in cold frames in spring. The seeds on the old flower panicles are grey-brown and quite tough when

ripe. They can be as numerous as the flowers themselves but, if you grow several forms of pieris, do not expect the seedling to necessarily perform like the seed parent. Pieris are more easily grown as semi-ripe cuttings in mid summer with bottom heat over winter. These plants are susceptible to honey fungus so plant them well away from old rotting stumps or dying elderly trees.



Pieris forrestii 'Forest Flame'



Pieris forrestii 'Forest Flame'



Pieris forrestii 'Forest Flame'



Pieris forrestii 'Forest Flame'



Pieris japonica 'Katsura'



Pieris japonica 'Katsura'



Pieris japonica 'Passion'



Pieris japonica 'Passion'



Pieris japonica 'Purity'

