

Plagianthus - Growing Guide

Growing Plagianthus Regius

(*P. betulinus*)

Commonly known as 'Ribbonwood'

A record gnarled tree of this New Zealand 'birch' was felled at Caerhays in the great hurricane of 1990. Those who see this tree cannot fail to be puzzled and attracted by its delicate new growth and fragrant flowers (perhaps not a fragrance that is attractive to everyone).

The young new growth consists of a mass of slender interlacing branches thinly furnished with soft green rounded leaves. There are many similarities with hoheria and especially *Hoheria angustifolia* to which plagianthus are related.

Our original tree was 40ft tall and replacements have grown at least to half this height in 15 years. The habit (like *H. angustifolia*) is columnar. Immature trees have smaller leaves which grow in size as the tree matures so they come more 'betula'-like eventually.

The flowers appear in large clusters or panicles at the end of the new growth once the plant is about 10 years old. The flowers normally appear in May or June but can be earlier. The panicles contain individual male (yellowish-white) and female (greenish) flowers.

All in all an unusual hardy tree which is growing in popularity and propagates easily from soft new growth cuttings taken early in the year and given bottom heat.



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