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Sinowilsonia henryi - Growing Guide

Growing Sinowilsonia Henryi

In spring (2019) there was an exciting moment when our plant of Sinowilsonia henryi produced its first catkins about 20 years on from planting. This small spreading tree is monoecious in that it produces male and female flowers or catkins on the same plant. We observed small greenish catkins which were erect at first then becoming pendant. After ‘flowering’ the female catkins lengthened and fruit currently appears to be forming. The female catkins were eventually 4-6in in length.

At first glance this tree looks similar in habit and leaf form to a Hamamelis. Sinowilsonia are indeed related to witch hazels. This rare and unusual tree was first introduced into the UK in 1908 by Ernest Wilson in whose honour it is named.

Our plant thrives in full sun on a hot bank. Another grows less well in a more shaded area with some dieback on the lower branches which is another feature shared with Hamamelis when they dislike their given location.

Although we have never tried ourselves the plant is said to strike from greenwood cuttings. It can also be grafted onto a Hamamelis rootstock. Time will tell if we can now grow this rarity from seed.

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