

Symplocos - Growing Guide

Growing Symplocos Paniculata

Outside the front gates at Caerhays Castle Gardens there is a large mature clump of *S. paniculata* which has achieved a height of around 15ft. This is a tall growing deciduous shrub of great merit both from its flowers but, more particularly, from its berries. These shrubs have a dense twiggy habit and resemble *Viburnum tomentosum* in this respect although the leaves themselves do not. It originates from China, Japan and Taiwan.

S. paniculata has attractive panicles of small white fragrant flowers in May or June and then, in the autumn, the shrubs are covered in a profusion of ultramarine blue fruits. These do not seem to appeal to the birds and generally persist into winter. They can readily be collected and sown in the spring for best results with the blue seed coverings removed first after collecting.

This plant seems to fruit best after a long hot summer and these original plants here were planted together to improve fertilisation although this may well be unnecessary.

We are currently growing another very different species of *Symplocos* from seed and hope to have a few plants available on the website in a year or so. This is the very rare and evergreen *Symplocos dryophila* which is also a large shrub (or nearly a small tree) of some 10-12ft in height. It grows best in shade and in extreme shelter. The white erect racemes of flowers with prominent stamens appear in March or April and, while strongly scented, it is not perhaps the nicest scent. The seeds are black and juicy when fully ripe and here there is competition with the birds.

The two species are so different that it is hard to accept that they are from the same genus.

Burncoose Nurseries: Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ

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

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