

Vallea - Growing Guide

Growing Vallea Stipularis

This is an unusual large shrub or small tree which ought to be much more widely grown in UK gardens. I first saw this plant in John Marston's garden at Gorwell growing up through other things on a wall. That is not to say it was not capable of supporting itself but that it was a plant used to growing in conjunction with other things to support it.

V. stipularis is native to the Andes from Colombia to Bolivia. It is therefore best grown in the UK against a hot, sunny wall perhaps alongside a *Passiflora* or a jasmine so that the two can intertwine.

The leaves are fleshy and variable in size. Some are ovate and entire while others are three lobed and ivy-like with greyish undersides. Small kidney shaped stipules at the base of the petioles are another distinct feature of this plant as is its attractive reddish new growth.

The impressive cup shaped flowers are dark rose red fading to deep pink, each with five three lobed petals and numerous stamens in April/June. The large and numerous flower clusters hang down and are best observed from below. If not grown on a high wall the plant needs to be grown on a bank with a path below to appreciate its spectacular flowers properly.

This was a lockdown discovery for Burncoose which we are now propagating from softwood cuttings with bottom heat. When grown in a greenhouse we have seen occasional secondary flowers on this plant in the height of winter. *V. stipularis* has proved perfectly hardy outside in Cornwall in normal winters but is, perhaps, more borderline elsewhere. If in doubt keep it in the greenhouse until it is large enough to develop a decent woody trunk when perhaps 3-4ft tall.



Vallea stipularis and
Sassafras tzumu



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