BURNCOOSE NURSERIES PART OF THE CAERHAYS ESTATE

x Gordolina grandiflora - Growing Guide

Growing x Gordolina Grandiflora

This plant is a successful cross not between two separate species in one genus but between two entirely separate genuses: Franklinia alatamaha and Gordonia. This cross was first made at a research station in North Carolina in 2002 and first flowered in 2004. The leaves and flowers are larger than in either parent plant and what has been created is certainly a very handsome semi evergreen small tree. The older leaves turn a brilliant red in autumn and have been compared to the superb colour of Nyssas. The plant here has only been in the ground for a couple of years but is certainly making good initial growth. In the nursery autumn colours start to feature well before autumn and, sitting beside one of its parents (Franklinia), the x Gordolina is earlier into colour and, overall, a better display.

As yet we have still to flower this peculiar new introduction but the pictures we have seen show a large white flower which opens flat and has five petals with a large cluster of attractive central yellow anthers. Much larger in fact than the flowers of Franklinia and usually in mid-summer rather than towards autumn. This plant is still however all untested and untried in the UK but it may well one day be an unusual ‘gem’ in woodland gardens.

Other similar manmade bi-generic crosses (as opposed to those occurring in the wild) are few and far between and not all have proved to be viable plants. Crosses between Franklinia and Camellia have yet to survive for long. A cross between Schima argentea and Franklinia alatamaha has produced x Schimlinia floribunda which has yet to appear in the UK nursery trade as far as we know. x Rhaphiobotrya ‘Coppertone’ is a cross between Eriobotrya deflexa and Rhaphiolepsis indica or Rhaphiolepsis x delacourii. This is proving itself well in the garden at Caerhays.

Putting the pollen from the flowers of one genus onto those of another which may well not flower in tandem is one for a plant breeding laboratory and not one for gardeners and nurserymen.

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