

Chionanthus retusus

Chinese fringetree, Asiatic Fringe Trees



Chionanthus retusus (Chinese fringe tree, Asiatic fringe tree) comes from the forests of a broad swathe of Eastern and Central China, Korea and Japan, growing alongside, amongst others, *Tetradium danielii* and *Sorbus alnifolia*. In 1845, Russian botanist Nikolaus von Hartwiss distributed this tree to Europe from the Botanic Garden in the Crimea. The Chinese fringe tree develops more readily into a tree than the American *Chionanthus retusus*. The species grows as a multi-stem in the wild but in cultivation is also available as a small standard (on its own roots or grafted on *Fraxinus ornus*). *Chionanthus retusus* grows into a broadly vase-shaped tree, approximately six metres tall and wide.

During flowering from the end of May to the middle of June, *Chionanthus retusus* is completely covered in white, erect, sweetly-scented panicles. After flowering, green then bluey-purple-coloured fruits appear which stay on the tree for a long time. The smooth-edged leaf of the Chinese fringe tree emerges earlier than that of its American counterpart, is bright green and has a hairy, lighter underside. In warmer late summer conditions and climates, the bright green foliage can stay on the tree until December; in colder climates, it changes to yellow before dropping. The decorative peeling brown bark has larger platelets, corky fissures and grooves as it matures.

Chionanthus retusus occurs naturally on moist, acid and nutrient-rich ground but can in fact also withstand dryer and poorer soils. The species is not affected by diseases and pests and prefers a position in full sun although partial shade is also tolerated. Park-like sites and gardens are most suited to the Chinese fringe tree and it is, therefore, stunning as a multi-stem or standard. In this latter form the tree also makes a great selection in broad central reservations. *Chionanthus retusus* is a real eye-catcher in full bloom and deserves to be planted more widely.

TYPES OF PLANTING

Tree types: standard trees, feathered trees, multi-stemmed trees, characteristic trees, solitary shrubs | **Topiary on stem:** multi-stem umbrella

USE

Location: park, central reservation, in containers, large garden, small garden, patio, cemetery, traffic areas, industrial zones | **Pavement:** none

CHARACTERISTICS

Crown shape: wide vase-shaped | **Crown structure:** semi-open | **Height:** 4 - 6 m | **Width:** 4 - 6 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 6A - 10A

ASPECTS

Wind: slightly tolerant to wind | **Soil:** loess, sabulous clay, peaty, light clay, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level:** rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** moist, wet | **Light requirements:** sun, partial shade | **pH range:** acidic, neutral | **Host plant/forage plant:** bees, butterflies, birds | **Extreme environments:** tolerant to dryness

PLANTKENMERKEN

Flowers: panicle, striking, standing, flower-scented | **Flower colour:** white | **Flowering period:** May - June | **Leaf colour:** bright green, underside pale green | **Leaves:** deciduous, ovate, ovoid, leathery, polished, underside hairy | **Autumn colour:** yellow | **Fruits:** small, raceme, drupe | **Fruit colour:** blue-violet | **Bark colour:** grey-brown | **Bark:** peeling, corky | **Twig colour:** dark brown | **Twigs:** hairy, with lenticels, finely branched | **Root system:** shallow, slightly branched, highly branched, fine roots