

in their several selected clones.

These bamboos have shown little inclination to flower, at least in my lifetime. And in our climate they are compact in habit, not running about as they do where summers are warmer.

As a genus, they have far greater presence than the majority of bamboos, yet when the Award of Garden Merit Committee was sitting a few years ago, reviewing the lists of plants deserving this award, not a single phyllostachys was included. The nurserymen represented just did not want to know about them.

LESSER KNOWN AND UNUSUAL SHRUB SPECIES AND THEIR PROPAGATION

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These days people are constantly asking nurseries for something out of the ordinary. This paper contains a few suggestions that maybe of interest to the discerning gardener.

The Moroccan broom, or *Cytisus battandieri*, with its pineapple scented flowers, is usually grown from seed, but this method is not really satisfactory as the plants do not flower until quite mature. Micropropagated plantlets are sometimes available, but there are still problems with successfully establishing the plantlets.

The best results are from cuttings which, although not easy, are a good source of supply. The wood must be semi-ripe and taken rather late in the year, October or November. Our greatest success has been from plants kept in a poly-tunnel and the growing shoots taken when about 10cm long and quite whippy to the feel. They are then dipped in Synergol rooting hormone, at the rate of one part to six of water and inserted into individual pots of Cornish grit/peat, 3:1.

The pots are then placed in a carrying tray and put on the mist bed, with a base temperature of approximately 65°F. The mist is kept to minimum levels during the day and turned off at night as this species thrives best in a dry atmosphere. Rooting usually takes place in about 3 to 4 weeks, when the young plants should be carefully potted on into suitable containers. Care should be taken to avoid any root disturbance. This method produces a good quality plant that will generally flower during its first year.

Grafting, using laburnum as an understock, is not generally regarded as being ideal as the resulting growth is too lush and the plant is not long lived.

Climbing hydrangeas and relatives. While there seems to be a plentiful supply of *Hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris*, there

should be more thought given to some of its near relations, especially the schizopragmas. These plants, although deciduous, are a useful addition to the garden for covering walls and fences.

Propagation is usually by cuttings taken from wood of the current season's growth, about 10cm long. The leaves of *Schizophragma integrifolium* may be halved to lessen moisture loss through transpiration. The cuttings are dipped in a Synergol solution of one part to three of water; they root in about three weeks. *Schizophragma hydrangeoides* is treated in a similar manner, although the need to reduce the leaves does not apply as they are somewhat smaller.

A near relation of this species is *Pileostegia viburnoides* and, although best grown in milder areas, it has survived temperatures of minus 12°C at our nursery on the south coast of England in the winter of 1986–87. This shrub is a good evergreen and, although rather slow growing, is a superb plant for covering a wall and has large bracts of creamy yellow color during the late summer. Propagation is quite easy, with cuttings being taken in late August and September; they root freely from all types of wood.

Although very similar in appearance to *Pileostegia*, *Hydrangea seemannii*, from mountains in Mexico, is a more recently introduced plant. It is a good evergreen with a large head of faintly scented white flowers, although as yet I have not seen these for myself.

For some colour early in the year, I would suggest *Prunus mume* or the **Japanese apricot**. Although usually grown as a wall plant, it makes an attractive warm border bush. A wall-grown specimen can well exceed 20 feet in height. Although there are numerous cultivars grown in the Far East, the ones most usually found in Great Britain are 'Beni-Shidori', a very good fragrant single pink, and 'Omoi-No Mama', a semi-double white. The form, *Pendula*, can also be found, but it would appear not to be very vigorous. At Hinton we propagate the above cultivars by means of bench grafting onto *P. cerasifera* in early February, just as the flower buds start to show. By this method we produce a good plant of 60 to 90cm, and of bushy habit, by August or September of the same year.

We have also had some success with rooting shoots of the current season's growth inserted during July, but the resulting plants are usually quite weak. Another method of propagating this species is by chip budding in late July and August on stocks planted in the open ground. Although not long lived, it is an excellent plant as it does provide a splash of colour in the dull early months of the year.

A plant which still gives propagators a few problems is *Romneya coulteri*. This good border plant is becoming more widely grown at last. *Romneya*, sometimes known as the California tree

poppy, is a semi-shrub plant with succulent herbaceous stems that grow to 1.5 to 2.0 metres. The flowers have satiny white petals with a rounded boss of golden yellow stamens at the centre. This is essentially a suckering shrub that can be grown in most locations, although a nice sunny position next to a warm wall would be an ideal place for it.

Propagation is best performed by means of root cuttings taken during late January to early February. It is essential that roots of the current season's growth only are used. Old roots do not regenerate. Sections of these new roots should be cut into lengths of about 4 to 5cm, placed in pots of a sandy mixture and put into an open frame with gentle bottom heat of about 15°C. It is important to stress that the roots should be placed no more than 1.5cm beneath the pot surface and when watering, great care should be taken to ensure that the pot is not over-wet, although as the root is near the surface, it must not be allowed to dry out. As a rule, the roots will produce shoots quite quickly, usually within three to four weeks of planting.

In April or May, when the small plants are about three months old, potting on must be done with great care as the new roots do not take kindly to being disturbed. This has been the method that we have found to be most successful, although soft cuttings taken in late June can be attempted. These do, however, produce problems of establishment which are more difficult to overcome. Seed of this species also offers a way of propagation, but it is often unreliable.

At our nursery, we have planted a nursery stock bed to give us sufficient roots. This stock bed is completely renewed every year with a number of new young plants selected for their health and vigour. During any severe weather we cover them with a 15cm mulch of peat to keep out the worst of the weather.

Another interesting species is *Fabiana imbricata* and the violet blue form, 'Violacea'. This could be grown far more widely in the more favoured milder areas. Fabiana is very often mistaken for a tree heath, but has a very distinct habit of growth, mainly vertical, but sometimes issuing out branches at unusual angles. It will attain a height of some two metres and the flowers are either white or violet blue, appearing during June and July and looking very like a tropical heath.

Propagation is best achieved by cuttings that root freely during late summer, if taken with a heel. Care must be taken not to damage the stem when stripping the lower portion of the cutting, as any damage will allow rotting to occur in the boxes. Rooting usually takes place after four to five weeks when placed in a mist house or closed frame with gentle bottom heat. This species was subjected to temperatures of minus 14°C during the winter of 1986–87 but came through unscathed. It would appear that if you can protect these so-called borderline hardiness plants from the prevailing winds, so that

the foliage is not desiccated they may well survive.

Cornus controversa 'Variegata' is a most elegant small tree or shrub which is not very freely available, probably because it is not the easiest plant to reproduce. It is very striking in its habit as it grows and produces its branches in tiers rather like an open umbrella, with one tier upon another, ascending upwards. Propagation to date has been by means of grafting the striking variegated form onto a *C. controversa* seedling. As yet, I have been quite unsuccessful with any other means of propagation, although a near relation, *C. alternifolia* 'Argentea', seems to root from softwood cuttings taken in July.

Obtaining seed or seedlings of *C. controversa* does sometimes present a problem, as the seed often takes a long time to germinate and in some seasons is not always viable. We have found that the best time to graft the species is rather late in the season when the scionwood is starting to harden, about early September or even a week or so later. Any earlier and the soft tips of the scion will keel over and the growing buds would be lost.

With the seedling stocks of about pencil thickness, or a little less, established in small pots, they are allowed to dry out for a few days before grafting. The scionwood is selected from strong growing tips of about 10 to 15cm in length and the leaves reduced by half to prevent excessive moisture loss. The stock and scion are then bound together in the traditional manner as low down as possible and the joint waxed. Callusing should normally take place quite quickly if the plants are placed in a closed frame with a gentle bottom heat of about 60 to 65°F. It is essential that the frame be shaded, especially on very warm days which sometimes occur during the early autumn. After about four weeks, the head of the stock should be removed and the cut waxed over. This is very important as, if it is left, the stock will sometimes bleed and infection will set in. After a further hardening-off period of 14 days or so, the plants can be kept over winter in a frost-free greenhouse ready for potting on in the following spring.

As an experiment, some 10 years ago, I grafted *C. controversa* 'Variegata' onto cuttings of *C. alba*, ensuring that all the eyes were taken off before grafting. Today I have some good sized specimen plants about two metres high from which I obtain my scions. However, I do not know if they will be very long lived.

Another good evergreen genus is *Trachelospermum*. These plants are particularly good for cladding a wall or fence as they have very fragrant flowers during the summer months and must surely be rated as one of the best climbing plants available. At my nursery in Hinton, all cultivars have withstood the recent hard winters protected from the easterly winds.

Probably the most favoured species is *Trachelospermum jasminoides* with its white, scented flowers and bright evergreen

foliage. We also cultivate the variegated form, which is very attractive. *Trachelospermum asiaticum* has rather small leaves and pale apricot-yellow flowers which are also scented and perhaps a little hardier than *T. jasminoides*. Propagation of all the forms is by cuttings of semi-mature growths taken during August and September. When cut, the shoots will exude a milky white sap, which should be stopped by dipping the cuttings in a rooting powder while preparing for insertion into boxes containing sand/peat, 3:1. Rooting should be well under way in less than four to five weeks. By this method a good, saleable sized plant can be obtained in about 12 to 15 months.

A genus that is regarded as being very common is *Buddleia*, especially the hybrids of *B. davidii* but, in fact, there are numerous species, some of which should be, in my opinion, more widely grown. One in particular is *Buddleia crispa*. This is a shrub of neat bushy habit, growing to about 2 to 3 metres in height with a most striking silvery appearance, the leaves and stems being covered in a downy felt. The flowers are a soft lilac and very sweetly scented.

A good, partially evergreen, species is *Buddleia salviifolia*, with its square stems and brown-red down on the underside of the leaves. The flowers are very fragrant and the colours range from white to purple. This plant is quite vigorous and will grow to about five metres in height in good conditions.

Although *Buddleia alternifolia* is very popular, a much more striking plant is *Buddleia alternifolia* 'Argentea', with its delicate silver foliage giving the long sprays of purple flowers a perfect foil. Lastly, I must mention *Buddleia auriculata*. Although essentially a cold greenhouse or conservatory plant, it is an evergreen well worth growing for its superb scent during the dull days of winter when there is little else in flower. The flower is not particularly striking, being of a creamy white colour, but the honey-like scent can sometimes be overpowering in an enclosed situation.

Propagation of the buddleia species is generally regarded as being quite easy, either from softwood cuttings taken during July or from hardwood in November. Some of the species, especially the furry-leaved ones, can be a little more difficult to root. The secret, we have found, is to keep the foliage as dry as possible, while still maintaining a humid atmosphere. We generally use a closed frame technique, with gentle bottom heat and heavy shading during very sunny days.

Finally, in conclusion, I would stress that the hardiness of all the species I have mentioned is open to question, while growing in pots. Once planted in the open ground and having made a reasonable amount of growth, most, if not all, will survive the average British winter. I would suggest, therefore, that perhaps we should be a little more adventurous in offering the gardening public what it seems to want . . . something a bit different!