

Production of *Fortunearia sinensis* from Seed®

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INTRODUCTION

Fortunearia sinensis Red. & Wils. is a little known member of the Hamamelidaceae, and little if any information is available for either horticultural or research purposes. It is a large shrub with pubescent leaves that are obovate and look similar to a pubescent *Corylopsis* to which it is related. The green flowers are insignificant and occur in terminal racemes and are not particularly showy. Female flowers emerge with leaves and the male flowers are catkin-like in appearance. Fall color is yellow. Griffiths (1994) suggests a Zone 8 designation but plants growing at the Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia suggest a much hardier plant. Zone 6 is a more likely and appropriate classification. The plant occurs naturally in central and eastern China.

While sparingly effective as an ornamental horticultural plant, it deserves recognition and study to further understand the nuances of the Hamamelidaceae.

PROPAGATION

Since little is written about this plant, information is scarce. An Internet search failed to turn up even one reference. Seed is not readily obtained on the commercial market, and there are few plants available anywhere for a thorough study on its propagation. However, a large plant at the Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia did have an ample seed crop, and this served as a starting place for some experimentation on seed germination.

When confronted with a species that is not well known the most appropriate approach to its propagation is to see what techniques are available for members of the same genus, and if that is not available, then reference should be made to members of the same family and further up the phylogenetic profile until some kinship can be established. Being in the hamamelis family, there is ample literature on closely related genera such as *Corylopsis*, *Hamamelis*, and *Parrotia*.

Since the other members of the Hamamelis family can readily be grown from seed it was decided to try the same techniques with *F. sinensis*.

Dirr and Heuser (1987) mention two techniques for germination of *Hamamelis* × *intermedia* hybrids. One suggestion was for 3 months warm moist stratification followed by 3 months cold moist stratification. Another entry reported 12 months warm followed by 3 months cold. They go on to say that fall sowing will result in germination the second spring. With *H. vernalis* they mention a series of tests with 5 months warm followed by 3 months cold gave an 85% germination rate.

Following this lead, the 5-month warm moist period followed by the 3-month cold moist period was implemented. The fruit was collected fresh before dehiscing and placed in a paper bag so that the expelled seed could be captured. The fresh seed was not stored and was placed in the warm moist stratification regimen once all the pods had released their seed. The stratification substrate was moist perlite. Seed was mixed with moist perlite (1 : 10, v/v) and enclosed in a clear zippered polybag.

The warm moist stratification and cold stratification was carried in total darkness. After the required stratification periods were met the seed was removed and sowed in a large tray with a count being taken to ascertain germination percentage.

After a period of several weeks in normal greenhouse temperatures of 20 °C, germination percentages were checked. The results were good with 100% germination. Thus it appears that *F. sinensis* is easily grown from seed like many other members of the *Hamamelis* tribe.

LITERATURE CITED

- Dirr, M.A., and C.W. Heuser, Jr. 1987. Reference manual of woody plant propagation: From seed to tissue culture. Varsity Press, Athens, Georgia.
- Griffiths, M. 1994. Index of garden plants. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon.