

Friday, March 1, 2024

Lonicera fragrantissima

Scientific name: *Lonicera fragrantissima* Lindl. & Paxton

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

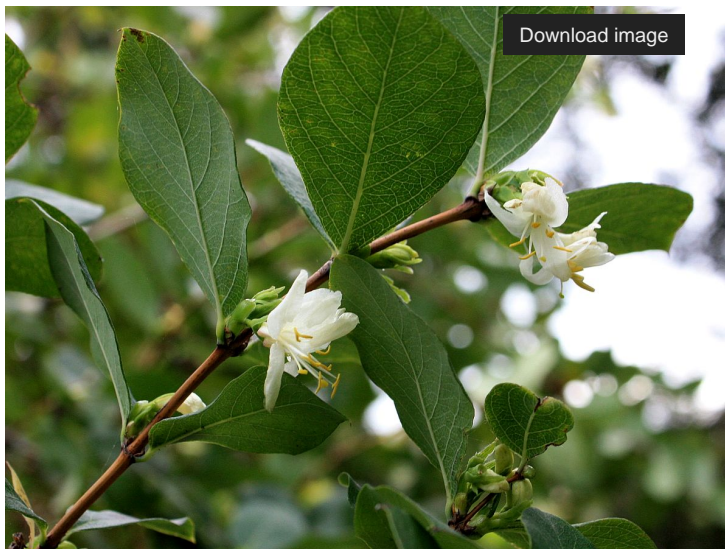
Common name: Winter Honeysuckle, Sweetest Honeysuckle

This is one of the most exquisitely scented shrubs in the garden, and it is not for nothing that the species name is *fragrantissima*. The genus was named after Adam Lonitzer, a 16th century German naturalist. It grows in a dense clump, about 2 m high, and can reach up to 4 m or more.

This species is native to China. The leaves are oval-shaped, 4-9 cm long, darker green on the upper side than on the underside. The flowers occur in pairs; they are small, no more than 1 cm, but their scent spreads all around them. They are tubular and creamy white. The corolla is bilabiate, with a lobed upper lip and a recurved lower lip; the stamens protrude conspicuously from the corolla.

It is a hardy and highly adaptable plant, so its use as an ornamental has spread throughout the world. In some places, depending on conditions, it can behave as a semi-deciduous plant. In Chinese tradition, medicinal properties are attributed to the leaves and flowers, such as anti-inflammatory and antipyretic properties. In India it has also been given various uses, for stomach problems, as an antifungal, and even as an antidote for snake venom.

This honeysuckle does well in semi-shade, although it can also be in the sun. *Lonicera* species are among the most pollution-absorbing plants, so they are useful for cleaning up pollution in cities. The specimen at La Concepción is on the stairs in the staff car park; when you walk past it you can smell its scent. Flowering takes place in winter, and in late spring there will be its fruits, small red berries.

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