

Friday, March 1, 2024

Lonicera japonica

Scientific name: *Lonicera japonica* Thunb.

Family: *Caprifoliaceae*

Common name: Japanese Honeysuckle

Honeysuckle is a well-known plant, which we will be focusing on during the month of July. It is a climber capable of densely covering walls and fences, with a long flowering period between spring and summer.

The flowers are arranged in pairs near the tips of the branches. They are fragrant, with a two-lipped corolla, and are white in colour, eventually turning yellow. Over time, the branches become hollow; they are hairy, with stiff hairs interspersed with long, glandular ones; these hairs have transparent glands at their tips, but turn a reddish-brown colour as they dry. The leaves are ovate to lanceolate in shape and are also hairy. The fruits are black berries when ripe; these are eaten by birds, which subsequently disperse the seeds.

The genus was named in honour of Adam Lonitzer, a 16th-century German naturalist. Although native to East Asia, its distribution is now virtually cosmopolitan, as it is established in many temperate regions across the globe, to the extent that in some areas it is considered an invasive species. It grows rapidly and is hardy and adaptable, so its spread must be controlled. In traditional Chinese medicine, the flower and leaves are said to possess antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Research is currently being carried out into its active compounds against certain viruses. In La Concepción, it can be seen as part of the 'Around the World in 80 Trees' route.

