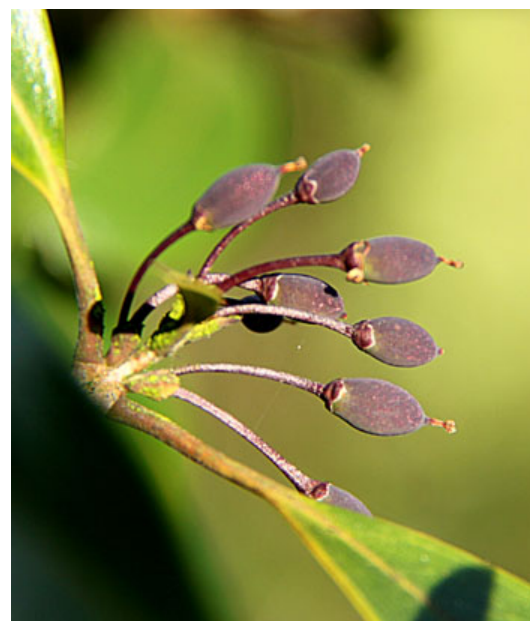


Osmanthus x fortunei, Fortune's Osmanthus



Osmanthus is a genus of about 36 species of flowering plants in the family Oleaceae. Most of the species are native to eastern Asia (China, Japan, Indochina, the Himalayas, etc.) with a few species from the Caucasus, New Caledonia, Sumatra, and North America (Mexico, Central America, south eastern United States).

Osmanthus range in size from shrubs to small trees, 2–12 m (7–39 ft) tall. The leaves are opposite, evergreen, and simple, with an entire, serrated or coarsely toothed margin. The flowers are produced in spring, summer or autumn, each flower being about 1 cm long, white, with a four-lobed tubular-based corolla ('petals'). The flowers grow in small panicles, and in several species have a strong fragrance which is likened to apricot and peach. The fruit is a small (10–15 mm), hard-skinned dark blue to purple drupe containing a single seed.

Osmanthus fragrans is the "city flower" of the cities of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Guilin in China. It is also a traditional symbol of love and romance in Taiwan. The bride prepared Sweet Osmanthus and Pomegranate pot plants and carried them to her new family. The fragrant plant symbolised True Love and Faithfulness and the fruit tree Fertility and Peace.

In Chinese cuisine, its flowers may be infused with green or black tea leaves to create a scented tea. The flowers are also used to produce Osmanthus-scented jam, sweet cakes dumplings, soups, and even liquor. Osmanthus jam is used as an ingredient in a type of gruel which is made from sorghum or millet flour and sugar, mixed with boiling water. This dish is associated with the northern city of Tianjin, although it may also be found in Beijing.

Other uses: Repellent - The flowers are used to protect clothes from insects; Medicinal - Tea is used for treatment of menopathies. Extract of dried flowers showed neuroprotective free-radical scavenging anti oxidative effects in in-vitro assays.

Family: Oleaceae

Genus: Osmanthus

Species:

Osmanthus x fortunei is the name shown on the label in the GBG. However, The Plant List shows it as an unresolved name. Sources give it as a cross between *O. fragrans* and *O. heterophyllus*.)

One of its parents is *O. fragrans* (a name accepted by the Plant List).

Common names:

O. x fortunei:

Fortune's Osmanthus

O. fragrans:

Sweet Osmanthus,
Sweet Olive, Tea Olive,
Fragrant Olive

Origin: Wide area of East Asia

Location in GBG: In the 'Oak lawn' of the 20th Century Garden, near the Tea house.

Time of flowering: Autumn

Meanings of its name:

osmo = odour, fragrant and
anthos = flower



Osmanthus x fortunei is a hybrid between *O. fragrans* and *O. heterophyllus*. (The Holly Osmanthus or False Holly) The latter is hardier than *O. fragrans* and flowers in the autumn. The descriptions for *O. fragrans* aka (Sweet Tea Olive) and *O. x fortunei* aka (Fortunes Osmanthus) are similar. However, *O. x fortunei* has darker leaves that are spiny like holly leaves. The growth habit of *O. x fortunei* is quite a bit larger and the leaves are entirely different. *O. fragrans* is the Tea Olive and has small but incredibly fragrant flowers in the cool seasons. *O. x fortunei* (typically called Osmanthus) is also fragrant, but nothing like the Tea Olive.

Photos: Fruit of *O. Heterophyllus*, Wikimedia.org.
Flowers and tree in GBG.

Geelong Botanic Gardens Map



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