
Ericaceae

A large, diverse family with over 3400 species from 107 genera. There are 18 European genera and 40 in N. America. Mostly woody or herbaceous almost all members of the family are restricted to cold, cool or cool-temperate climates and occur on humus rich, acid soils. Species of many genera are cultivated, especially of the two largest, *Erica* and *Rhododendron*. The flowers may be either solitary or borne in an inflorescence. They are usually bisexual. Either simple or irregular, flowers have usually 4 or 5 perianth lobes. The ovary is usually superior, with one carpel. Stamens, are as many as, or twice as many as the corolla lobes. Anthers usually open by pores and pollen is characteristically in tetrads. Leaves are typically simple, usually arranged alternately, opposite or appear whorled and evergreen.

In November 2002 a series of 9 drawings were submitted to the RHS. The set of drawings were awarded an RHS, Silver-gilt Medal in the Grenfell series.



Arbutus unedo - (Strawberry Tree)

Arbutus, the only genus of trees in the family includes species from North and Central America and the Mediterranean. The natural range of *A. unedo* extends into southern Ireland, though it is often also planted in parks and gardens in southern England. *A. unedo* has distinctive bark, dark red at first, fading to cinnamon and eventually obscured by gray- brown scaling ridges. The flowers and fruit are borne together in October and November, with the previous year's fruit ripening at the same time as the current year's flowers. The fruits are edible, but are rather insipid.



Calluna vulgaris - (Heather)

Calluna is a genus of low growing evergreen shrubs mainly from the northern hemisphere. *C. vulgaris* is widely distributed in the British Isles, on heaths, bogs, woods and upland moors. Although naturally occurring, on grouse moors it is also carefully cultivated to provide food for young birds. The dominant vegetation of the moorland of Northern Britain the flowers of *C. vulgaris* colour heather moors purple in late summer. After pollination the petals are not shed but instead wither in situ. The fruit matures within, and the seeds are shed from, the dried corolla.



Enkianthus campanulatus - (Pagoda Bush)

Enkianthus is a genus of slow growing, deciduous shrubs from East Asia and N. America. *E. campanulatus* is from Japan. Though it may eventually reach 4-5M, specimens in cultivation are rarely more than half that height. It is grown both for its abundant, spring flowers and its luminous autumn colour.



***Erica cinerea* - (Bell Heather, Ling)**

Erica cinerea is the commonest British member of an enormous genus of low growing, evergreen shrubs and sub-shrubs from the northern hemisphere and South Africa. *E. cinerea* is widely distributed in the British Isles, on heaths, bogs, woods and upland moors. Locally the dominant vegetation, it is more usually found straggling among *Calluna vulgaris*. As with *Calluna* the petals are not shed after pollination but instead wither and dry in situ, the fruit maturing within, and the seeds shedding from the remains of the corolla.



***Gaultheria shallon* - (Shallon)**

The *Gaultheria* genus of evergreen shrubs come from the Americas. Many were introduced into cultivation in the UK to provide cover in game coverts though they are now used widely for ground cover in woodland and shrubbery plantings. *G. shallon* grows 1.5 – 2M tall, the young growth is distinctively pale in colour. The flowers are covered in sticky pink hairs. The fruits are edible and said to be pleasant tasting.



***Pieris* "Forest Flame"**

Pieris are dense, evergreen shrubs upto 4M tall, which were introduced from East Asia and North America. An evergreen, upright shrub *Pieris* 'Forest Flame' can grow up to 4M. 'Forest Flame' is thought to be a cross between *P. formosa forrestii* 'Wakehurst' and *P. japonica*. It was derived from a self-sown seedling found at the base of a *P. japonica* at the Sunningdale Nurseries. *P. formosa forrestii* was first described in 1914 as the species *P. forrestii*, it was developed from seeds collected by Forrest during his first expedition to Yunnan, about 1904-06.



***Rhododendron* "Cynthia"**

Rhododendron 'Cynthia' is a 19th century hybrid, probably between the North American (Appalachian) *R. catawbiense* and *R. griffithianum* (originally from Sikkim, Himalaya). It is one of the Ponticum Group of evergreen rhododendrons growing upto 5M tall. It is also one of the earliest to flower, usually in late May. The specimen illustrated came from one of the many mature rhododendrons in Sheffield Botanical Gardens, which were probably planted during the fashionable period of 19th century 'Rhododendromania'.



***Vaccinium myrtillus* - (Bilberry)**

Vaccinium is a genus of low growing, deciduous shrubs from the northern hemisphere, many of which are prized for their edible berries. *V. myrtillus*, is widely distributed in British Isles, either as the dominant vegetation on moorland and heaths, among *Calluna* on heather moors, or as an understorey in mixed woodland. The growth habit is quite variable depending on the environment. Bushes may be up to 1M tall when growing in the sheltered woodland environment. On an exposed moorland, mature plants may be barely an inch tall. The berries are frequently collected and much prized for use in pies and preserves.

Bibliography

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