

Chaenomeles speciosa

[Synonyms : *Chaenomeles lagenaria*, *Cydonia japonica*, *Cydonia japonica* var. *lagenaria*, *Cydonia lagenaria*, *Cydonia speciosa*, *Pyrus japonica*]

JAPANESE QUINCE is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to central China it has orange-scarlet to pink or white flowers with yellow stamens.

It is also known as *Boke* (Japanese), Chinese quince, *Chinesische Zierquitte* (German), *Cognassier ornamental de Chine* (French), Common flowering quince, *Coing du Japon* (French), *Cydonia*, Flowering quince, *Hochwachsende Zierquitte* (German), *Japánbirs* (Hungarian), Japanese flowering quince, *Japanse kwee* (Dutch), Japonica, *Kdoulovec lahvicovitý* (Czech), *Kdoulovec ozdobný* (Czech), *Kiinanruusukvitteni* (Finnish), Ornamental quince, *Storrosenkvitten* (Swedish), *Tie geng hai tang* (Chinese), and *Zhou pi mu gua* (Chinese); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of excellence.

Speciosa is Latin (beautiful, showy, handsome, splendid).

It is only in recent years that the shrub's botanical name has been changed from *Cydonia japonica* when it was placed in the quince family. This explains why it is still called Japonica or Cydonia.

The hard and white-speckled, very fragrant, greenish-yellow fruit (that are inedible when raw) can often be cooked with apples to make a jelly, and can be used as an alternative to quince (*Cydonia oblonga*).

Apparently it is the famous English botanist, Sir Joseph Banks (1744-1820), who is credited with introducing Japanese quince to the Botanical Gardens at Kew in 1796. Fifty years later it was noted that the shrub was a familiar garden plant that, by then also, had even attracted some poetic reference. The blossom seems to have been eulogised by a Miss Twamley who, in *The Romance of Nature*, calls it fairy fires

That gleam and glow amid the wintery scene
Lighting their ruddy beacons at the sun
To melt away the snow

In Japan this species is particularly popular for bonsai cultivation.

It is the birthday flower for 21st December.