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Osmanthus fragrans

[Synonyms : *Olea fragrans*, *Olea ovalis*, *Osmanthus longibracteatus*, *Osmanthus macrocarpus*]

KWEI is a shrub or tree. Probably native to eastern Asia (particularly China and Japan) it has small highly scented, white flowers.

It is also known as Fragrant olive, *Ginmokusei* (Japanese), Lanhoa, *Mokusei* (Japanese),

Osmanthus (English, German), Sweet olive, Sweet osmanthus, Sweet tea, and Tea olive.

Fragrans is derived from Latin *fragrantis* (fragrant, pleasant-scented, sweet-smelling).

In China where it has been cultivated for centuries the dried flowers have long been used as a flavouring in tea and confectionery.

Kwei has been a familiar sight growing around temples in the south-east Asian peninsular still sometimes referred to as Indo-China – and the scented flowers have been picked as offerings to the gods.

Benjamin Torrin, who was posted as a supercargo for the East India Company out of Canton, sent a specimen of kwei back to Britain and it arrived there in 1771.