

Plant of the Week

Loropetalum

Chinese Witch-hazel (*Loropetalum chinense*) is a native of China, Japan and the Himalayas in north-eastern India and is closely related to the Witch-hazel of North America (*Hamamelis virginiana*).



The Chinese Witch-hazel takes its name *Loropetalum* from the shape of the flowers and comes from the Greek *loron* – λουρί - meaning **strap** and *petalon* - πέταλο - meaning **petal**¹. It is also known as the “**Fringe Flower**”.

In China, *Loropetalum* is known as 檵木 - Ji Mu, the Silk Ribbon Tree because the character for silk - 丝 – appears to be included twice in the character 檵 and refers to the **ribbon-like petals**². 木 means **wood**. It has long been cultivated as a garden plant. There are two forms, the original with green leaves and yellowish white flowers and another form which has cerise flowers and purplish leaves. Both are popular as *penjing* (Chinese bonsai) plants. The variety with dark purple-red leaves appears to have originated in southern China and was not described until 1944 from plants found in Hunan Province, supposedly by botanists from the same expedition that discovered the Dawn Redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, a plant formerly thought to be extinct³. The cerise form is also known sometimes as 红花檵木 - Hong Hua Ji Mu, the Red Flowered Silk Ribbon Tree.

In China, both green and red forms of *Loropetalum* are considered to have many healing properties. They do have some of the astringent qualities associated with the North American Witch-hazel.



¹<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loropetalum>: *Loropetalum chinense* var. *rubrum*

<http://www.clemson.edu>: *Loropetalum chinense*

²Valder, P. 1999. The Garden Plants of China.

³<http://www.monrovia.com/plant-catalog/plants/>

Production: A.J. Downing & K.D. Downing, 5.09.2010
(唐爱森, 唐科文 - 2010 年 09 月 5 日)

Downing Herbarium, Department of Biological Sciences,
Macquarie University.