

# Chinese Lantern



Chinese Lanterns are unique perennials. They produces fiery orange fruit that resembles exotic tissue paper globes. Hardy and easy to grow, this variety adds an attractive pop of color in borders, bouquets or dried arrangements.

In Japan, its bright and lantern-like fruiting calyces form a traditional part of the Bon Festival as offerings intended to help guide the souls of the dead. A market devoted to it – hōzuki-ichi – is held every year on 9–10 July near the ancient Buddhist temple of Sensō-ji in Asakusa.

## *Phygelius alkekengi (Alkekengi officinarum)*

- **Use:** Chinese lantern is a charming ornamental plant that can bring a touch of whimsy to your garden, with its delicate red-orange husks. Whether you grow it as a curiosity, or with the intention of using its stems for colorful autumn bouquets, this perennial will provide an unexpected source of bright fall color.
- **Exposure/Soil:** Prefers full to part sun. Requires well-draining soil and appreciates slow release fertilizer. Water regularly under the leaves. If you are not good at watering get some **Soil Moist**. In extreme heat it may need daily watering.
- **Growth:** Moderate grower 24" high and wide. Can be invasive in warm climates so maybe best for a pot.
- **Hardiness:** Zone 3-9; Perennial
- **Foliage:** Deciduous; Dainty, green heart shapedleaves.
- **Flowers:** Chinese Lantern produces plenty of 1-1½" white flowers with yellow stamens in the mid weeks of summer, but it's the winsome inflated seed coverings that follow that really cause a stir. The attractive, bright orange seed pods are poisonous, and the unripe berries can be highly toxic and possibly fatal (although the ripe fruit is edible). The dried fruit is called the golden flower in the Unani system of medicine, and used as a diuretic, antiseptic, liver corrective, and sedative.

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