

Most of these have rooted in 1 to 3 weeks (depending on the time of year) and most have had between a 95% to 100% strike rates.

When the weather is cool I have found that if I put the above plants on the hotbed it can speed up the strike time considerably.

This list of plants is not exhaustive and there are many other plants that I am sure would do equally as well as the above and it just means a bit more trialling. As yet I have only trialled two Australian native plants, so that is a large area to explore.

LITERATURE CITED

Gordon, I. 2001. Using ultra soft tips for cutting propagation. Austral. Hort. June/July p. 59.

Propagation of *Camellia sinensis* var. *sayamakaori*®

Ralph Scott

Spencer Scott and Sons, 1185 Bells Line of Road, Kurrajong Heights 2758 NSW

INTRODUCTION

Camellia sinensis var. *sayamakaori* is one of the cultivars used in Japan to produce green tea. The variety *Sayamakaori* is one of the cultivars imported into Tasmania about 10 or 12 years ago. In our experimental trials with three of these cultivars, we have found this one the best to grow in our area.

PROPAGATION

Propagation of *Camellia sinensis* var. *sayamakaori*. The cuttings are collected from the new growth of plants propagated the previous year.

These plants are grown in 140-mm pots on wire mesh benches 600 mm high under 60% shade cloth; they are watered and fertilised as required.

Pests are not a major problem. The only pests we have are aphids that in the spring attack the new shoots resulting in deformed leaves and the light brown apple moth, which is a leaf roller and a native of Australia, so can be found in most areas where green tea would grow.

Cuttings of *C. sinensis* var. *sayamakaori* may be taken at any time, but best results are achieved during the warmer months of the year. We have had most success between December and March in the southern hemisphere. Trials of cuttings from October/November are successful if very soft tips are removed and only semi-hard material is used.

Cuttings are collected early in the morning, before 10:00 AM if possible, being firm mature growth terminal shoots. These are then taken to the production area to be processed into cuttings.

The cuttings are prepared in a clean and cool area to assure they are kept in their best condition. Cuttings should be about 100 to 150 mm in length. These are cut below a node, wounded on one side, and the lower leaf removed. If soft tip cuttings are used wounding is not required and material is usually less than 100 mm in length.

It is important that secateurs are kept sharp and sterile during all processing of cuttings. We use Felco type secateurs to gather the material and scissor type to process the cuttings.

Growth Regulators. We have used rooting hormone in our early stages in growing tea, but of late have found it not required unless the cutting material is very hard.

Containers and Media. The containers used are tree tubes about 50 mm square and 150 mm high. These containers are ideal as the plants can be grown in them to planting-out stage if required, and also lower the cost to growers.

Environment. We have three glasshouses all running North/South, each having a different pitch on the roof. Rooting varies slightly between each house and light levels are higher in the smaller house with the greater pitch. We use the small house for the tea to speed up the rooting time.

The propagating benches are 900 mm high with a sand bed with in-bench electrical cables supplying bottom heat maintained at 24 °C during propagation. Overhead mist irrigation maintains the humidity at approximately 87%. Because this mist operates for 8 sec at 5-min intervals, the humidity will rise and fall during this period, giving an average of 87%.

Cuttings treated as outlined will usually callous within 15 d with full root initiation within 5 to 6 weeks. If required to pot into larger size pots it is important this be carried out as soon as possible, as tea can be very hungry and unless well fed will get pot bound and damaged.

Propagation and Cultivation of Selected Central Australian Wildflowers[©]

Tim L. Collins

Alice Springs Desert Park, PO Box 2130, Alice Springs, Northern Territory 0870

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Central Australia is home to over 2000 species of plants, many of which exhibit remarkable adaptations to the harsh climate. Rain may not fall for long periods and then arrive in flooding quantities. Plants have evolved under these conditions and many survive the dry times by reproducing and growing opportunistically. The deserts are known to produce masses of ephemeral flowering plants after autumn and winter rain (Urban, 1990), which transform the desert landscape with a variety of flower forms and colour.

The first impression of a visitor to Central Australia is usually the vast scale of the landscape and the drabness of the dominant sclerophyllous (Jessop et al., 1981) vegetation. These visitors are unlikely to witness the floral bounty of rare precipitation. These reproductive events occur during the cooler months of the year when heavy rains cause dormant seeds to emerge and grow.

The Botany Team at the Alice Springs Desert Park is using some of the more showy species in horticultural displays and as potted plants.

HORTICULTURE IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA — ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Availability of water and nutrients affects the distribution of natural vegetation in the arid zone (Jessop, 1981) and also provides the greatest challenges to horticulturalists looking to produce plants in the extreme conditions. Summers are characterised by high temperatures and low humidity, whilst winter temperatures regularly drop below zero and frost is common in Alice Springs.