

Photographic Portfolio:

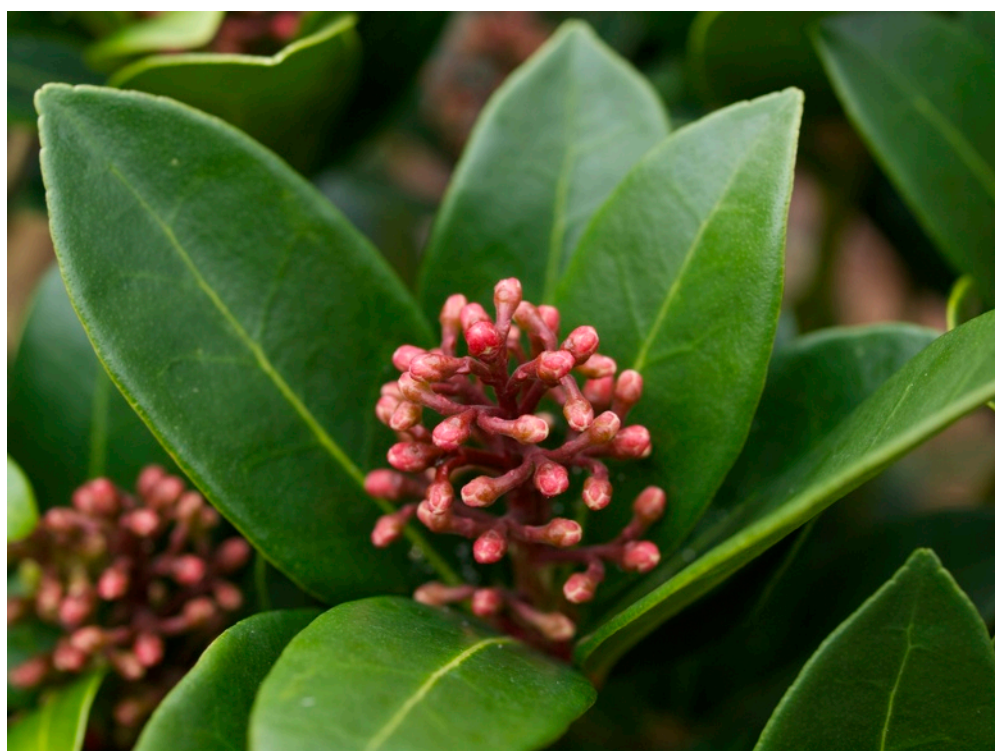
Skimmia

By photographer Miriam Heppell

Many of the shrubs in my garden were old and required a great deal of pruning to prevent them from overshadowing other plants. Last year I decided it was time to re plan and had them removed (well I did keep cuttings). I wanted plants that would survive shade, clay soil, provide year round interest and apart from a few spadess of our homemade compost require no maintenance. The answer was Skimmia and the photographs that follow are my new plants.

The Skimmia Genus originates from the woodlands of Japan, China, South East Asia and the Himalayas. All Skimmia are full hardy, like shade, are tolerant of pollution and will grow well on moderately fertile soil with very little attention. For best results, just deadhead and don't prune them!

In the winter months they are a particularly attractive plant with aromatic evergreen foliage, bright fruit followed by flower buds which bloom in spring. The plants are either male, female or self pollinating hermaphrodite forms, but to have a good crop of fruit to follow the flowers on female forms, you will need both male and female plants. One male to two or three female forms is a good ratio. Even the self pollinating plants benefit from the presence of a male variety for good fruit production. The fruit is not edible and will cause gastric irritation if ingested.



This is the lovely female *Skimmia japonica* Olympic Flame showing soft cream to pink early spring flower buds which open into white flowers. This lady does need a male companion if the flowers are to be followed by long lasting bright red fruits in the autumn. It is one of the larger varieties, reaching 1.5 metres in height and width.



Self pollinating *Skimmia Japonica* subsp. *reevesiana* is a compact plant with fragrant white flowers followed by autumn and winter scarlet red fruits. Here the conical flower buds above dark green leaves are like tiny horse chestnuts in bloom. I am planting this one in isolation as it has a lean spareness about it which will blend with trees.



This compact cultivar is award winning *Skimmia Japonica* Magic Marlot introduced in 2007 from the dutch nursery, Van Son & Koot. This intriguingly named plant changes colour; white flower buds to red and then tiny white flowers. All set against soft green and silver to yellow leaves. With all these colours, it fits in to most group planting schemes, and looks good in a pot. No berries though as it is a male plant.



Skimmia japonica Rubella is a male plant with striking red flower buds which are produced during the late autumn. The scented pale pink or white flowers follow during the spring. Dark green leaves become edged in red as the plant matures.

Rubella is Latin for 'little red' but information on the spread of the plant varies from 60 centimetres to 1.5 metres.

I have planted mine on a sloping part of the garden, under trees, where I can see the lovely red glow from the house.

This is *Skimmia japonica* Thereza and despite the rather feminine name is a male plant. The pale yellow green buds produce profuse star like cream flowers will provide an impression of light in a shady spot. As it is a compact 50 centimetres it will also look attractive in a container.



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