

ETSU Arboretum Plant Spotlight: Chinese Emmenopterys



In early August 2017, Chinese Emmenopterys (*Emmenopterys henryi*) was blooming abundantly in the home landscape of Dr. Tim McDowell, Professor of Botany at East Tennessee State University. Flowers were very fragrant and frequently visited by yellow swallowtail butterflies.

Rare in the wilds of China, Emmenopterys may be even rarer in cultivation. Discovered in 1907 by renowned botanist and plant hunter, Ernest H Wilson, he described it as: "...one of the most strikingly beautiful trees of Chinese forests."

Emmenopterys is widely distributed in south-central China, but is endangered due to agricultural expansion, logging, and poor forest regeneration. A member of the coffee family (Rubiaceae), the tree can grow to over 100 feet, although large specimens are extremely rare. Clusters of fragrant, creamy white, 1-inch, funnel-shaped flowers can be up to 10 inches across and are surrounded by large white "bracts," similar to those seen on Japanese hydrangea vine (*Schizophragma*).

According to the *China Plant Red Data Book*, it does not flower until 30 years of age and usually sets seed once every 2 to 4 years. The 15-year old specimen at Dr. McDowell's garden has flowered in other years, but never so fully. His plant came from Forestfarm Nursery in Oregon, which no longer lists it.

Submitted by: Hugh Conlon
(Additional data researched from Wikipedia)