
Paulownia fortunei

In May 2013, during Chelsea week the International Dendrology Society visited Peasmarsh Place in East Sussex. In his report Dan Luscombe (see pages 89 - 90) relates how the group admired a young specimen of *Paulownia fargesii* in full flower. Nearby is an older tree of *P. fortunei* which, until a few years ago, also flowered most years in a spectacular way, as illustrated in the picture below taken in 2007; the tree was then aged just over 20 years, having been supplied by John Horsman of Fyne Trees in Scotland in 1986.

It is difficult to say why the *Paulownia fortunei* is no longer flowering as well as its close relative *P. fargesii* is now doing but the records show that the *P. fortunei* hardly flowered at all in 2011. This was due to the severe early winter weather killing most of the flower buds; during the very hot Easter weekend of 22 to 25 April when temperatures reached 27° C it leafed up and flowered almost simultaneously. In June that year the tree was measured to have a girth of 2.4 m and was over 15 m tall with a similar spread – this represents an enormous growth rate for a plant that was at first thought to be doubtfully hardy in southern England. Unfortunately the tree has not yet produced any viable seed.

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