A Rare Chinese Tree Flowers in North America

Frederick G. Meyer

Ernest H. Wilson, in *Plantae Wilsonianae* (1917), describes *Emmenopterys henryi* Oliver of the Rubiaceae as “one of the most strikingly beautiful trees of the Chinese forests.” Although Wilson brought seeds to the Arnold Arboretum about 1907, no living plants are known from this early introduction.

The purpose of this notice is to report what is believed to be the first flowering of *Emmenopterys henryi* in the New World, an event that occurred late in July, 1994, in the collection of Dr. Allen Hirsh of Silver Spring, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C. The origin of this material can be traced to an introduction by the Arnold Arboretum in 1979 (AA#579-79). The seeds, which came from the Nanjing Botanical Garden, were delivered by hand to the Arnold Arboretum by a touring delegation of botanists from the People's Republic of China. The seeds germinated after a month of cold stratification, and extra seedlings were subsequently distributed to a variety of locations, including the Woodlanders Nursery in Aiken, South Carolina. It was from this source that Dr. Hirsh purchased his plant in 1988.

The plant is now about fifteen feet tall with widespread branches and thick, dark green leaves with reddish petioles. The showy white flowers, three-fourths of an inch long, occur in a flattish inflorescence with marginal white bracts as are found in some genera of the Rubiaceae, notably in *Pinckneya pubens* of the southeastern United States. The flowers are fragrant and the bracts turn pinkish as the seeds ripen. In China, Wilson reported trees forty to eighty feet tall. It can also be reported that the specimen in Silver Spring, Maryland, and some other specimens at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., survived unscathed from the frigid winter of 1994 when the temperature plummeted to −10 degrees Fahrenheit and stood at 0 degrees for several days in an unprotected site.

Outside of China, flowering of *Emmenopterys henryi* has been reported only in Italy in 1971 and in England in 1987. Herbarium specimens documenting the flowering of Dr. Hirsh's plant have been deposited in the U.S. National Arboretum herbarium (Meyer 22604). If readers know of any other plants of *Emmenopterys henryi* that have come into flower, please report the information to the Curator of the Herbarium, U.S. National Arboretum, 3501 New York Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20002.

Emmenopterys henryi photographed in flower in Silver Spring, Maryland, by the author.

Frederick Meyer is Supervisory Botanist Emeritus, formerly in charge of the herbarium, of the U.S. National Arboretum.