

## EARLY SPRING COLOR TO WARM YOUR SOUL

John Frett

Flowering quince has been cultivated for thousands of years in China, Korea and Japan as a bonsai specimen and for use in flower arrangements. A member of the rose family, it was first introduced into English gardens in the late 1700's and found its way into gardens in the United States in the early to mid 1800's. It was a favorite in rural gardens and on farms for its attractive flowers, edible fruit and cover for wildlife. Its popularity is evidenced by the more than 500 cultivars described.

There are three species commonly grown in gardens: *Chaenomeles speciosa*, common flowering quince; *C. japonica*, Japanese flowering quince; and the hybrid species *C. x superba*, a cross between the previous two plants. A fourth species, *C. cathayensis* has the largest fruit of the genus but is seldom grown, while *Cydonia oblongata* is raised for quince fruit. Flowering quince is closely related to pears (*Pyrus*) and the fruiting quince (*Cydonia*). This close relationship is illustrated by the fact that the plant was previously placed in both of these genera. There is another close relative *Pseudocydonia sinensis*, Chinese quince, which has also been placed in the genus *Cydonia* and *Chaenomeles*. So, from a landscape perspective, what is the difference?

Common flowering quince (*C. speciosa*) is, by far, the most frequently grown quince in the landscape. Plants mature at 6 to 10 feet tall with an equal or greater spread and form a densely branched shrub. In the UDBG, we prune plants to the ground every 3 years to maintain a more compact size. Stems are variably spined making an impenetrable hedge. New foliage emerges with a distinctive bronzy red cast but quickly turns glossy dark green with very large stipules (typical of all *Chaenomeles*). The fruit is 2-2.5 inches, more or less rounded, green ripening to yellow with a red blush, and fragrant when brought indoors in the fall. Japanese flowering quince (*C. japonica*) is less frequently cultivated. It is a smaller plant, maturing at 3 feet tall and 3 feet or more wide. Due to the more compact habit, plants do not need rejuvenative pruning to maintain height. Stems are dense and uniformly spined. Flowers open before common flowering quince by a few days. Research has shown that Japanese quince is the most cold hardy

and resistant to late spring frost. The fruit matures yellowish green, is 1-1.5 inches in diameter, and is fragrant.

The hybrid flowering quince (*C. x superba*) attempts to combine the best of the two previous species. Plants are more



*Chaenomeles speciosa* 'Iwai Nishiki'  
Photo: Melinda Zoehrer



*Chaenomeles speciosa* 'Toyo Nishiki'  
Photo: Rick Darke

*Chaenomeles speciosa*  
'Scarlet Storm'  
Photo: Kathy Barrowclough



compact, growing 4-6 feet tall with a slightly wider spread so rejuvenative pruning is optional. Stems can be spined or spineless. Fruit is intermediate in size but still bitter/tart if not allowed to fully ripen. Breeding has primarily focused on this group, with flower size, number and color range maximized.

Chinese quince (*Pseudocydonia sinensis*) is the largest of the plants that we offer. It is a large shrub or small tree growing 10-25 feet tall. The upright growth habit can be easily trained into a tree form to display the colorful, exfoliating bark, which occurs in shades of grey, green and orange brown. Stems often exhibit fluted or sinuous growth. Branches lack spines. Lustrous, dark green leaves in the summer turn yellow, orange and red in the fall; it is the only one of the quince to produce fall color. Chinese quince has the largest fruits of the quinces we offer, maturing at 5-7 inches long, more egg shaped than round.

The fruit of all of the quinces we offer are edible. Quince fruit is very tart, especially if picked too early, and is used to make jellies and preserves. High levels of pectin make the quince good for jellies; high organic acids give a tart flavor; very high vitamin C offers nutritional value. The easiest way to appreciate the fruit is to bring them into the house to enjoy their fragrance.

All of the quinces are tough, adaptable plants. They grow well in full sun to part shade and thrive in all but wet soils. The density of the plant branches makes them impenetrable and therefore a favorite nesting spot for birds. All make excellent hedges in the toughest of sites. Japanese flowering quince and smaller selections of the common and hybrid flowering quince can serve as foundation plants, while Chinese quince makes an excellent small flowering tree to be appreciated, particularly in the winter. Where space is not limited, a group of three or five flowering quince makes an extraordinary spring display.



*Chaenomeles* 'O Yashima' Photo: Melinda Zoehrer

I have saved the best for last—the flowers. The primary reason flowering quince are grown is for their early spring (March-early April) eruption of color in the landscape. Even more, the flowers are not yellow, so typical of early flowering shrubs. Flowers range from white to pink, salmon, orange and red. Some cultivars



*Chaenomeles speciosa* 'Pink Storm' Photo: Melinda Zoehrer



*Chaenomeles speciosa* 'Texas Scarlet'  
Photo: Rick Darke

have flowers of multiple colors on the same branch, such as *C. speciosa* 'Toyo Nishiki'. While the species are typically five petaled, many cultivars are semidouble to fully double with 30, 40 or more petals appearing as 1.5 inch roses clustered along the stems. The floral display is striking and lasts for up to 4 weeks, depending on weather. Many plants have a tendency to produce a few flowers in the fall, a characteristic that I have always enjoyed. While not nearly as stunning as the spring display, it adds color at a time when few shrubs have flowers.

Latin name	Common name	Mature Size	Light	Soil	Pot Size, Plant Size	Price
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<i>Chaenomeles</i> 'O Yashima'	Flowering Quince	4-6	☉☁☔	3 g, 1-2	\$35	
Several references rate this as the most spectacular double white flowering quince. Pure white flowers are produced in April on spreading plants. ♡						

<i>Chaenomeles japonica</i> 'Chojuraku'	Common Flowering Quince	4-5	☉☁☔	3 g, 1-2	\$35	
The compact plants boast large numbers of striking, large double orange flowers. Effective from late March to mid-April. ♡						

*Chaenomeles speciosa* Double Take™ Storm Series  
The Storm series marketed under the Double Take™ name from Proven Winners® are great plants from Dr. Thomas Ranney's breeding program at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center at NC State University. These plants have remarkable doubled petals creating miniature roses clustered along the stems in the spring. Plants are also thornless, do not produce fruit, and are mid-sized plants.

<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> 'Orange Storm'	Common Flowering Quince	4-6	☉☁☔	1 g, 1-2	\$25	
2-2.5 inch orange flowers open in March; 31-49 petals. ♡						

<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> 'Pink Storm'	Common Flowering Quince	4-6	☉☁☔	1 g, 1-2	\$25	
2-inch pink flowers in March; 29-40 petals. ♡						

<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> 'Scarlet Storm'	Common Flowering Quince	4-6	☁☔	1 g, 2-3	\$25	
2-2.5 inch scarlet red flowers in March; 17-25 petals. ♡						

<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> 'Iwai Nishiki'	Common Flowering Quince	3-4	☉☁☔	3 g, 1-2	\$35	
Compact plants produce abundant double, deep red flowers that resemble small camellia flowers.						

<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> 'Texas Scarlet'	Common Flowering Quince	2-3	☉☁☔	3 g, 1-2	\$35	
An old standard but still considered by many to be the best red-flowered selection. The profuse scarlet flowers are produced on a plant with a wide habit.						

<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> 'Toyo Nishiki'	Common Flowering Quince	6-8	☉☁☔	3 g, 2-3	\$35	
Unique among the quinces listed here because of the multiple flower colors. It is common to have both pink and white flowers on the same branch, even a flower with a mixture of pink and white petals. Red flowers tend to occur on separate branches. ♡						

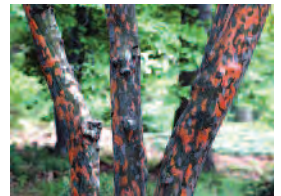
Latin name	Common name	Mature Size	Light	Soil	Pot Size, Plant Size	Price
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<i>Chaenomeles</i> × <i>superba</i> 'Cameo'	Hybrid Flowering Quince	4-5	☉☁☔	3 g, 2-3	\$35	
The double peachy pink flowers are produced in mid to late April, often still flowering as the foliage emerges. ♡						

<i>Chaenomeles</i> × <i>superba</i> 'Crimson and Gold'	Hybrid Flowering Quince	2-3	☉☁☔	1 g, 1-2	\$25	
The compact plants boast velvet crimson-red petals with bright yellow stamens that truly live up to the cultivar name!						

<i>Chaenomeles</i> × <i>superba</i> 'Jet Trail'	Hybrid Flowering Quince	3	☉☁☔	3 g, 1-2	\$35	
A white flowered sport of <i>C. 'Texas Scarlet'</i> this compact plant with a spreading habit is shorter than <i>C. 'O Yashima'</i> .						

<i>Pseudocydonia sinensis</i>	Chinese Quince	10-25	☉☁☔	1 g, 1	\$25	
Typically grown as a multistemmed shrub or small flowering tree. Bark exfoliates into beautiful mosaic of grey green brown best displayed on tree form. The nearly 2-inch soft to deep pink flowers appear April to May. The egg shaped fruit is 5-7 inch long, maturing citron yellow and is highly aromatic. Fall foliage is yellow to orange and red.						



*Pseudocydonia sinensis* Photo: John Frett

## QUICK REFERENCE FOR CULTURAL SYMBOLS

**All plant heights listed in catalog are in feet. No inches are used.**

In order to help you select the right plant for your gardening needs, we have included the symbols below to indicate plant needs. These are broad guidelines, as plants can often withstand a wider range of conditions. Plants that prefer part shade may grow well in full sun if there is adequate soil moisture during hot, dry spells. Similarly, plants that prefer moist soils may grow well in drier sites if some shade is provided, especially midday.

### Light Recommendations

☉ full sun      ● partial sun      ● full shade

### Soil Moisture Recommendations

☁ dry soils      ☁ moist soil      ☁ wet soils

### Attract Birds, Butterflies and Caterpillars

♡ birds      ♀ butterflies and caterpillars

### Native

N after the plant description indicates plants are native to the Eastern U.S. Cultivars of native plants are considered native, as these are a selection from variants in the population.