

FIRE THORN OR HAWTHORN (*Pyracantha*).



Pyracantha is a literal translation of the Greek "pyr" meaning fire and "*acantha*" meaning a thorn. They are so named because their sharp spines cause a burning sensation when they penetrate skin. Fire thorns originate in the temperate climates of Asia and Europe. These extremely hardy bushes can withstand cold as well as heat and will grow practically in any soil. They bear small white flowers and the branches are tightly packed with berries from early autumn right through winter. The berries are non-poisonous

Fire thorn bonsai are often styled in the formal and informal upright styles but full- and semi-cascades are exquisite. They are not suitable for rock plantings or groups. Fire thorns are propagated by seed or cuttings made of semi-ripe wood during mid- or late summer. There are several varieties which are very ornamental because of the shape of their leaves and the colour and number of the berries they produce. *Pyracantha coccinea* is the natural firethorn. It carries bright red berries and is often invasive. The "Lalandei" hybrid is stronger and produces large orange-red coloured berries.

Pyracantha augustifolia is a dense, spreading, bushy shrub with rigid horizontal branches and small leaves. The cream-coloured flowers appear in early and mid-summer producing orange-yellow berries.

P. fortuneana "Orange Charmer" is highly decorative. It is the preferred subject for bonsai because it flowers profusely and produces thick clusters of bright, yellow-orange berries that stay on the plant for a very long time.

P. atlantioides is a fast-growing, erect shrub bearing long-lasting scarlet berries. The "aurea" variety produces clusters of yellow berries.

P. rogersiana. The white flowers produce reddish-orange berries. There are varieties that produce yellow and red berries.