

Tree of the Month, July 2014: *Emmenopterys henryi*

Emmenopterys henryi is endemic to southwestern China, where it is a protected species. It is rare in cultivation, found more often in botanical gardens than private ones. At VanDusen, we have two tall, healthy *Emmenopterys* trees, with elliptic green leaves with red petioles (leaf stems). These trees were planted in 1990, but they finally bloomed in 2023. The long hot summer of 2023 may have had something to do with it.

Emmenopterys has fragrant white flowers with five petals and an accompanying bract. They normally bloom for about a month in the summer. When English plant collector Ernest Wilson was in China in 1907, he admired the *Emmenopterys* and thought they would be popular in British gardens. He sent seeds back to his employers in England, and over the next few years they were planted in several gardens in Europe and the UK. The first *Emmenopterys* to bloom in Europe was in 1971, in the garden of a Northern Italian villa. The first to flower in the UK was at Wakehurst Garden in 1987, over 75 years after the tree was planted. *Emmenopterys* developed a reputation for being very slow to flower – that is, until the Americans began growing them.

The first *Emmenopterys* to flower in North America was a 15-year-old specimen in Maryland, in 1994. In 2004, two six-year-old trees bloomed at Quarryhill Botanical Garden, just North of San Francisco, California. In 2007, the *Emmenopterys* at Stephen F. Austin State University Garden in Eastern Texas began blooming at age nine. Obviously flowering has little to do with the age of the tree, but climate could be a big factor. In order to flower, *Emmenopterys henryi* seems to require warm springs, hot summers, and cold winters, as found in its habitat in southwestern China. California and Texas seem to meet those requirements, while Northern Italy and the UK do not.

The *Emmenopterys* at VanDusen Botanical Garden can be found in the Sino-Himalayan Garden and the Fern Dell.

