

Rare flowering of Chinese tree in Belgium

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A flower from the *Emmenopterys henryi* tree, originally from the Chinese forests, is pictured in bloom at an arboretum near Antwerp, in Kalmthout, providing a very rare sight for Europe. The tree, a Chinese member of the coffee plant family, was first planted in Europe in 1907. Before today's flowering it had bloomed only four times in Europe.

An endangered Chinese tree has flowered in a Belgian arboretum, an event seldom seen anywhere in Europe, the garden's curator said Wednesday.

The *Emmenopterys henryi*, billed as "one of the most strikingly beautiful trees of the Chinese forests" has brought flower lovers flocking to the Kalmthout Arboretum in the northern province of Antwerp and will do so for up to a month, the site's curator Abraham Rammeloo told AFP.

He described the greeny-white trumpet-shaped [blooms](#), which grow in

clusters, as being "a bit like climbing hydrangeas but much more beautiful,"

According to the arboretum, there have only been four previous major flowerings of the tree in Europe since it was first brought over from China a 100 years ago.

The first time was in Italy in 1971, another was at Wakehurst Place in England in 1987 and twice before it has bloomed at the same Belgian location.

"We're probably just lucky," said Rammeloo, before explaining that the 40-50 year old tree was relatively mature for Europe.

"We probably chose the most suitable location by accident," he added.

"We cleared a ditch and there was probably plenty of moisture for it there," which it needs and "a couple of other [trees](#) have been taken away in the last ten years to allow it more sun," he explained.

The tree, indigenous to southern China's temperate forests, is under threat there from [deforestation](#) and is now rare both in the wild and in gardens.

Rammeloo said the best time to see the rare [flowers](#) in Antwerp would be over the next two weeks, although they could last through to mid-September.

A special viewing platform has been built for visitors to admire the little flowers, which blossom at the top of the tree.

Emmenopterys henryi have also flowered occasionally in the United States.

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