

Heptacodium miconioides Seven-Son Flower



Hepta means seven in Greek. The number refers to the number of flower heads that bloom in each cluster on the seven-son flower.

Septem also means seven, but in Latin. This is the root of September which was the seventh of ten months in the old Roman calendar.

Look closely at the flowers

Seven-son flower buds form in early summer and slowly increase in size, bursting forth with creamy white flowers by the end of August. In Massachusetts, flowers last until early October.

While looking for food, thousands of species of insects and animals help plants reproduce. Most people know that bees are important pollinators, but that's not all. Many species of butterflies, bats, birds, moths, flies, and wasps are also pollinators.

When flowering is over, the calyces (collective term for sepals) do not fall off but persist and continue to grow. The fruits develop from the flowers—light green at first, then ripening to a rose-purple. The rich purple color remains attractive for several weeks, as the fruits continue to ripen. At full maturity, the fruits turn tan and slowly fall away.

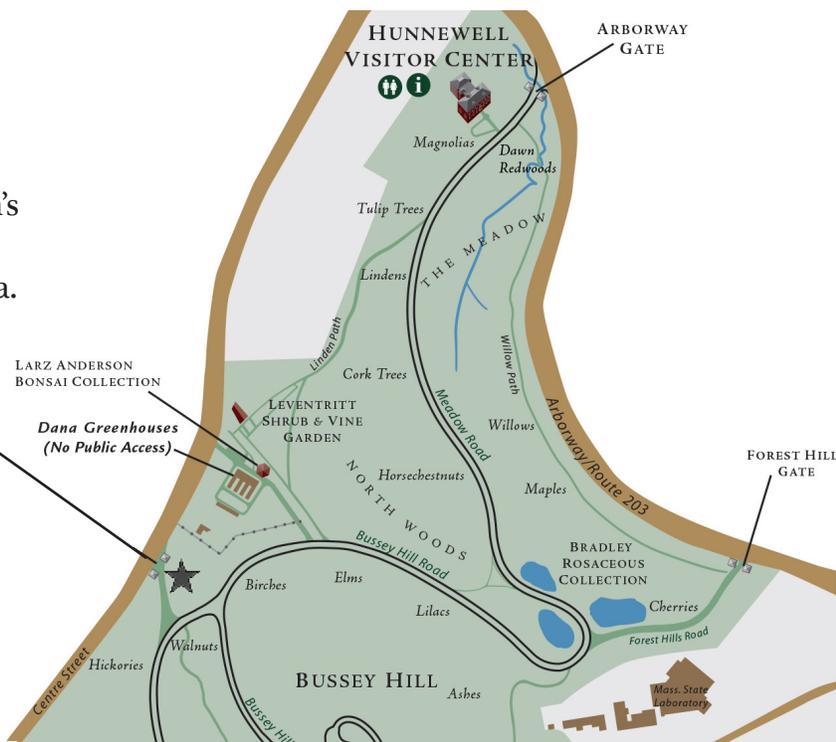
A little history...

In 1916, Arboretum taxonomist, Alfred Rehder first described *Heptacodium*. It had been collected by plant collector, E.H. Wilson on his 1907 expedition to western China. Rehder assigned it to the Caprifoliaceae family, to which viburnums and honeysuckles also belong.

In 1980, several American botanists, including Steve Spongberg from the Arnold Arboretum, collaborated with a team of Chinese scientists for the Sino-American Botanical Expedition. At the Hangzhou Botanical Garden, the botanists were excited to see a living *Heptacodium* and requested seeds for propagation. Today, the Arboretum has six plants from that expedition growing in the landscape. The Arboretum helped distribute this rare Chinese plant across North America. Today, *Heptacodium* is more abundant in this country than in its homeland.

Five plants from E.H. Wilson's 1907 expedition to western China are located in this area.

Can you find them?



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