

# *Loropetalum chinense* ‘Snow Panda’

Margaret R. Pooler<sup>1</sup>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. National Arboretum, Floral and Nursery Plants Research Unit, 10300 Baltimore Avenue, Building 010A, Beltsville, MD 20705

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The U.S. National Arboretum has been an active member of the North America China Plant Exploration Consortium (NACPEC) since its first expedition in 1991. These trips have contributed to knowledge about the taxonomy and botany of Chinese plants as well as helped to conserve rare species and broadened the base of plants available for use in U.S. landscapes (Aiello and Dosmann, 2010). We describe a new cultivar of *Loropetalum chinense*, or Chinese fringe flower, a selection originating from seed collected during a 1994 NACPEC trip.

## Origin

*Loropetalum chinense* ‘Snow Panda’ originated from seeds collected near Yan Chi He, Hubei, China, in Sept. 1994 by Paul Meyer on a NACPEC expedition (NACPEC collection number WD121). Several seedlings from this trip were grown in the shrub breeding research nursery at the National Arboretum in Washington, DC, and in 2006, ‘Snow Panda’ was selected in cooperation with Monrovia Growers (Visalia, CA) and propagated for further evaluation. ‘Snow Panda’ has been tested in both Washington, DC, and in Visalia, CA.

The name ‘Snow Panda’ was registered in 2013 with the International Registration Authority for Unassigned Woody Genera (Susan Pell, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn, NY) in accordance with the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (Brickell, 2009). Herbarium type vouchers collected by the author will be deposited in the U.S. National Arboretum Herbarium.

## Description

*Loropetalum chinense* ‘Snow Panda’ (National Arboretum No. NA75507, Plant Introduction No. PI660659) was selected for its abundant, white fringe-like flowers that appear in early spring next to medium green leaves on a loosely vase-shaped but open plant (Fig. 1). Primary distinguishing features are its more upright habit compared with the species and its profuse flowers in the spring. It is a moderately fast-growing shrub that has grown 10 feet high and 8.5 feet wide in 15

years in Washington, DC. Flowers are white [Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) 157B (Royal Horticultural Society and Flower Council of Holland, 1986) with four strap-like petals (each  $\approx 1.5$  cm long) on each flower with five to eight flowers in a cluster. Flowers occur primarily in spring around the same time as new foliage but may also appear sporadically throughout the summer. Evergreen leaves are elliptic, 2 to 4.5 cm long by 1 to 2.5 cm wide, with entire margins. The adaxial (upper) leaf surface is medium green (RHS 137A) and the abaxial (lower) surface is yellow-green (RHS 148B). Inconspicuous seed capsules ripen in the fall and are 0.6 cm long.

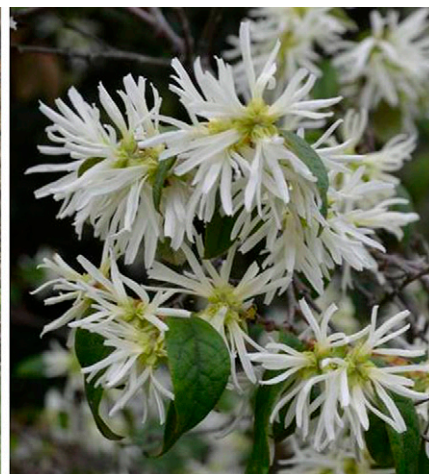


Fig. 1. *Loropetalum chinense* ‘Snow Panda’ in full bloom (left) with close-up of flower clusters (right).

## Culture and Use

Statements and recommendations on plant performance and culture are based primarily on plant performance in replicated trials at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, DC, and in Visalia, CA. ‘Snow Panda’ is adaptable to the same cultural conditions as other *Loropetalum chinense* cultivars and grows and flowers best in moist but well-drained slightly acidic soils with high organic matter content. It tolerates full sun or partial shade but will flower best in full sun. Established plants are relatively drought-tolerant, and it has few disease or pest problems. It is hardy

in USDA zones 7 to 9 (USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, 2012) although may not be fully evergreen in colder regions. ‘Snow Panda’ propagates readily by softwood or semihardwood cuttings dipped in 1000 to 3000 ppm indole-3-butyric acid and placed under mist. Cuttings can be placed directly into liner-sized pots with rooting occurring in 4 to 6 weeks.

‘Snow Panda’ is well suited for use as a sheared evergreen hedge or screen, foundation plant, mass planting, or as a backdrop in the shrub border. Because of its growth rate and ability to withstand pruning, it is also suitable for use in containers, especially as bonsai or penjing, or even trained as an espalier.

## Availability

Like all other woody ornamental plants released from the National Arboretum, ‘Snow Panda’ is not patented, so it may be propagated and sold freely. Plants are available from a limited number of wholesale and retail nurseries (source list available on request). The National Arboretum does not have stock of this cultivar available for general distribution but can supply budwood or unrooted cuttings to nurseries wishing to propagate this plant.

## Literature Cited

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<sup>1</sup>To whom reprint requests should be addressed; e-mail Margaret.Pooler@ars.usda.gov.