

Family: Proteaceae, Protea family

*Embothrium coccineum* 'Inca Fire'  
Chilean Fire-tree, Flame Tree, Flame Flower

Every once and a while we see plants that are simply stunning. I saw such a plant when I participated in Carol Goodwin's English Gardening Course in May (it was great!). One of the first gardens we visited was Kiftsgate Court Gardens. Overlooking the Vale of Evesham, the garden is the work of three generations of women gardeners. It features a manor house and several gardens. A copper beech hedge separates parts of the garden. Growing in front of the hedge was a tree about 20 feet tall with spectacular crimson scarlet flowers. This was my introduction to *Embothrium coccineum* 'Inca Flame'. 'Inca Flame' is an introduction made by a New Zealand nursery.

The tree was brought from the temperate forests of Chile and Argentina to the UK by intrepid plantsman, William Lobb, in 1846. It is used as an ornamental shrub in the UK. It is also found in the Pacific Northwest of the US and as far south as Northern California and Texas. It will tolerate temperature no lower than -10 Celcius. It is not happy with the higher temperatures achieved in Southern California. It is sensitive to the presence of phosphorus. It must be grown in soil free of lime. It is upright in form with narrow leaves. It blooms in April and May in the UK and in May and June in the US. It is a magnet for hummingbirds. It suckers. Some notes say it is fast growing and short lived.

It is a vivid crimson exclamation mark!

