



By Paul Pilon

Sedum Sunsparkler 'Dazzleberry'

THIS BREAKTHROUGH IN GROUND COVER SEDUM BREEDING BOASTS ATTRACTIVE SUCCULENT FOLIAGE, EARLY FALL FLOWERING AND EXTENDED BLOOM TIME.

With its ease of production and strong performance, sedum continues to be a perennial plant of interest for growers, landscapers and gardeners alike. Recently, breeder Chris Hansen has introduced a new sedum called 'Dazzleberry', which is considered to be a breakthrough in groundcover sedum breeding. It is the first introduction in the Sunsparkler series of groundcover sedum; currently there are two additional cultivars in the Sunsparkler series: 'Cherry Tart' and 'Lime Zinger'.

'Dazzleberry' is an amazing plant with numerous appealing attributes. This groundcover sedum forms attractive mounds with fantastic smoky blue-gray foliage reaching 8 inches tall by 18 inches wide at maturity. In the late summer, it produces dazzling displays of large 6- to 8-inch raspberry-pink flower clusters that bloom for over seven weeks. The flowers open earlier than most of the fall-blooming sedum cultivars in production today.

Groundcover sedum thrives in sunny locations throughout USDA Hardiness Zones 4 to 9. Although locations receiving partial sun are often acceptable, sites with full sun and dry soils will bring out the best foliage coloration. 'Dazzleberry' is well

suited for use in rock gardens and containers, harvested as cut flowers, or utilized in edge, border and mass plantings. Additionally, they are critter proof and not usually consumed or damaged by rabbits or deer.

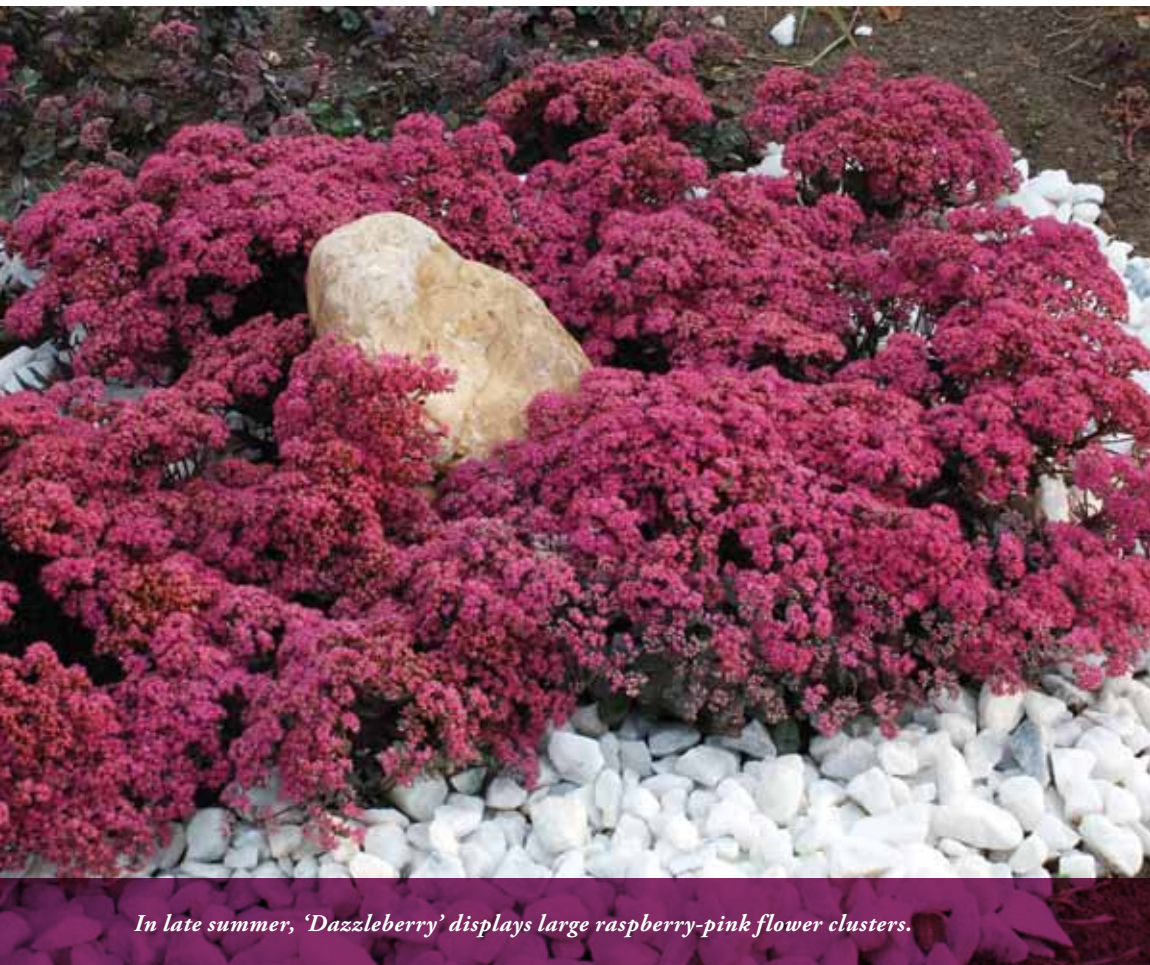
With its compact growing habit and attractive succulent foliage, great container and garden performance, early fall flowering, and extended bloom time Sunsparkler 'Dazzleberry' is a good candidate for today's perennial programs.

Propagation

Sedum 'Dazzleberry' is vegetatively propagated from tip cuttings by licensed propagators. It is a patented cultivar (PP22457); propagation without permission of the applicant is illegal.

Propagators should moisten the rooting medium in the liner trays prior to sticking the cuttings. For the first few days of propagation, provide a medium misting frequency; then move them to a low misting regime. Gradually decrease the mist frequency over time during propagation; misting is usually only required for the first seven to 12 days after sticking. Too much misting during propagation leads to poor root development. Once roots are present, decrease the moisture of the growing mix somewhat.

It is beneficial to begin feeding with 50- to 100-ppm nitrogen at least once per week beginning 10 days after sticking. It usually takes two to three weeks with soil temperatures ranging from 68 to 72° F for sedum to root. To promote branching, it is beneficial to pinch the liners after they are removed from propagation or at least a couple weeks before transplanting. Liners reach a trans-



In late summer, 'Dazzleberry' displays large raspberry-pink flower clusters.

plantable size four to six weeks after sticking.

Production

'Dazzleberry' is suitable for production in one gallon or smaller-sized containers with a single liner planted in the center of the pot. When planting,

the growing medium should be even with the top of the plug. Sedum performs best when grown in a porous, well-drained medium with a slightly acidic pH: 5.5 to 6.5. Many commercially available peat or bark-based growing mixes work well provided there is good water-holding ability and,

more importantly, adequate drainage.

Sedum prefer to be grown moderately dry. They are succulent plants and can tolerate average watering regimes but generally perform best under slightly dry conditions. When irrigation is necessary, water them thoroughly then allow the soil to dry moderately between irrigations. Keeping them on the dry side will help to reduce lush, soft growth and intensifies the color of the leaves and stems.

They are light to moderate feeders. Nutrients are commonly delivered using water-soluble sources, providing 75 to 100 ppm using a constant liquid fertilizer program or 150 ppm as needed. Controlled-release fertilizers can also be used to deliver nutrients; they can be top dressed onto the media surface using the medium rate or incorporated into the growing medium prior to planting at a rate equivalent to 1.0 pound of elemental nitrogen per yard of growing medium.

With the compact growing habit of 'Dazzleberry', it is not usually necessary to apply growth regulators to reduce control plant height during production. Under certain growing conditions or under high plant densities, it may be necessary to use chemical plant growth regulators. If height control is necessary, apply foliar applications of 30-ppm paclobutrazol (Bonzi, Paczol or Piccolo) or 5-ppm uniconazole (Concise or Sumagic) as needed.

Insects and Diseases

There are only a few problems with insects or diseases that growers may observe on occasion when growing sedum 'Dazzleberry'. Aphids are the most prevalent insect pest observed feeding on them. 'Dazzleberry' was selected to be less susceptible to foliar diseases. Crown and stem rots caused by the pathogens Fusarium, Phytophthora or Rhizoctonia are likely to occur when crops are kept consistently wet or if the growing medium has insufficient drainage. None of these diseases or insect pests require preventative control strategies; growers should scout their crops routinely to detect the presence of any problems and to determine if and when control strategies are necessary.

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Sites with full sun and dry soils will bring out the best foliage coloration.

Scheduling

Depending on the time of year the plants are being marketed, sedum can be sold as a foliage perennial, when the plants are budded, or once they are in full flower. With its' attractive blue-gray foliage, non-flowering plants of 'Dazzleberry' can be marketed throughout the growing season. Otherwise, they will flower naturally in the late summer, several weeks earlier than most fall flowering Sedums.

Non-flowering plants can be produced from 72-cell liners in as little as six to eight weeks for 1-quart containers or 10 to 12 weeks for 1-gallon

pots. Pinching is optional and will add two to three weeks to the production times listed above.

'Dazzleberry' can be grown to flower out of season to improve marketability and sales. Unlike many perennials, there is no juvenility requirement or cold requirement for flowering. One-quart or smaller sized containers do not need to be bulked up; however, larger sized containers would benefit from being grown under naturally short day lengths for several weeks in the fall prior to overwintering or in the spring before forcing them into bloom.

Sedums are obligate long day plants and will not flower when they are grown under short day lengths. Under long days (day lengths over 14 hours), the plants will begin to initiate and develop flower buds. To promote flowering when the days are naturally short, growers can provide photoperiodic lighting by extending the day length to 16 hours or using a four-hour night interruption.

The time to bloom after the onset of long day lengths is a function of temperature. Sedum 'Dazzleberry' takes approximately eight to nine weeks to reach flowering grown at 68° F.




'Dazzleberry' from 128-cell planted April 15, 2012; picture taken Aug. 31, 2012.



'Dazzleberry' from 128-cell planted April 15, 2012; picture taken July 15, 2012.

Availability

Sedum Sunsparkler 'Dazzleberry' was brought to the market by breeder Chris Hansen. Licensed propagators of this cultivar include Emerald Coast Growers (www.ecgrowers.com), GET Group Inc. (www.getgroupinc.com), North Creek Nurseries (www.northcreeknurseries.com), Stonehouse Nursery LLC (www.stonehousenursery.com) and Walters Gardens Inc. (www.waltersgardens.com). 

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