

Ornamental Shrubs:

B E Y O N D

the H Y P E

BY ALEC CHARAIS

Improved genetics in recent years has resulted in an incredible surge in shrub sales, but which plants are tried-and-true performers? Here are several that deserve your attention.

As I was paging through one of the latest consumer gardening magazines, I was struck by some common themes in terms of what I saw. Most of the spreads featured beautiful, compelling photos of lush gardens (as one would expect). As I continued browsing, I was also struck by consistent keywords that we all use when inspiring people to stop and pay attention to our plants: best, new, better, color, easy, natives, everyday, inspiration, simple ... the list goes on!

Our industry has seen a tremendous boom when it comes to the availability of improved genetics. This is especially true in woody shrub ornamentals. Much has been written about the growth of consumer brands that have pioneered the way for consumers to recognize what plants are usually the best performers for long-term success. With continued growth in the sales of branded plants, it is becoming more and more difficult to discern which plants are really standouts. It's not a bad problem to have, mind you, as generally speaking the genetics continue to get better and better!

It used to be that new plants were the driving force behind most sales strategies, and while new plants are still critical to the process, meeting consumers' everyday needs has risen to the top. All of those keywords I mentioned at the beginning of this article are designed to reach that core need that consumers want the most — to be successful and enjoy a beautiful environment that they created with our products.

This success transcends the garden. As yards continue to shrink and focus on urban revitalization grows, different uses for plants — especially shrubs — continue to evolve. Using shrubs in decorative containers on the patio has changed the idea beyond annuals that used to corner the combination container market. Breeders understand that breeding attributes for compactness, longer bloom periods, and unique foliage give growers, retailers and, most importantly, consumers flexibility in how they consume our products.

That said, here are five ornamental shrubs that meet these criteria and deserve to be considered for any landscape, garden or patio:



Ninebark 'Little Devil'

REBLOOMING HYDRANGEA

When Endless Summer launched in 2004 with the first *Hydrangea macrophylla* to bloom reliably on both old and new wood (which no consumers comprehend, by the way) the marketplace was in a perfect storm. Brands were new, and retailers sold Endless Summer at levels they had never seen for a new shrub introduction. As popularity for the brand grows, Bailey Nurseries continues to push hard to ensure that even better genetics are being introduced by the brand.

Thus, enter 'BloomStruck' with its prolific blooms and intense color, combined with exceptional cold tolerance and heat resistance. In the garden or on the patio, 'BloomStruck' is bred for both beauty and garden performance.

It is hardy to Zones 4 through 9. It reaches 3 to 4 feet tall and 4 to 5 feet wide, and prefers full sun to part shade.

DISEASE-RESISTANT TEXTURE

'Little Devil' has been around for some time now and for good reason. Its compact, yet upright, rounded habit and fine textured foliage sets it apart from other ninebark. It requires little to no

pruning and is free from most pest and disease issues, especially mildew, which plagues many other ninebark.

Its high adaptability to wet and dry soils make it an excellent substitute for barberry in areas where barberry may be invasive, and its compact habit makes a wonderful, clean, architectural-style container.



Fringe flower 'Crimson Fire'

'Little Devil' is hardy to Zones 3 through 7. It reaches 3 to 4 feet tall and wide, and prefers full sun.

COMPACT FRINGE FLOWER

A staple in the south, 'Crimson Fire' is the first truly compact red-leaf loropetalum on the market with proven cold tolerance. When other red-leaf loropetalum were severely damaged in the

winter of 2013-14, 'Crimson Fire' came through unscathed. Additionally, this well-behaved selection has controlled growth and doesn't throw out rangy shoots.

Its lovely evergreen foliage, combined with bright pink flowers in spring make it desirable for use in mass plantings or in combination containers.

ATLAS GREENHOUSE

Introducing the **Grand Peak Greenhouse**

Endless possibilities, maximum profits.

Manufacturing Structures. Providing Innovation. 800-346-9902 www.AtlasGreenhouse.com

f t in p

VARIETY INFORMATION

'Crimson Fire' is hardy to Zones 7 through 9. It reaches 4 feet tall and spreads 4 to 5 feet, and it prefers full sun to part shade.

VERTICAL ACCENTS

The demand for upright alternatives to arborvitae, especially in Midwestern states, has been needed for a long time. Finally, enter 'Straight Talk'. Its narrow, tightly upright habit make it the perfect vertical accent or screen. Super easy to grow and cold hardy too!

'Straight Talk' handles a wide variety of soils and has a clean look that architects crave in design. It can also be sheared into a short hedge. Perfectly suited for urban conditions this variety is here to stay for a long time.

'Straight Talk' is hardy to Zones 4 through 8. It reaches 12 feet tall and 2 feet wide, and prefers full sun to part shade.

LOW-MAINTENANCE COLOR

Dispelling the notion that roses are only red and violets are blue, 'Coral Cove' is rising to the top as one of the more unique shrub roses in the market today. It's incredible orange-pink color and petite size make this gorgeous, ever-blooming shrub rose impossible to ignore.

The small, perfectly rounded form makes an outstanding informal hedge along a walkway or garden path and makes a colorful decorative container pop!

'Coral Cove' is highly disease resistant and hardy to Zones 4 through 9. It reaches 2 to 3.5 feet tall and wide, and prefers full sun. [gpn](#)

Alec Charais is marketing and communications manager with Bailey Nurseries. He can be reached at alec.charais@baileynurseries.com.



Privet 'Straight Talk'

propagation trays
with results

bpgrower.com
BEAVER PLASTICS

available on [amazon Prime](#)

The advertisement features a top section with a close-up of white propagation trays containing green seedlings. Below this is a photograph of two men in a greenhouse; one is wearing a green and white striped polo shirt, and the other is wearing a plaid shirt and a white cap. They are standing next to a tray of plants. The bottom section contains the website name, logo, and Amazon Prime availability information.

Rose 'Coral Cove'