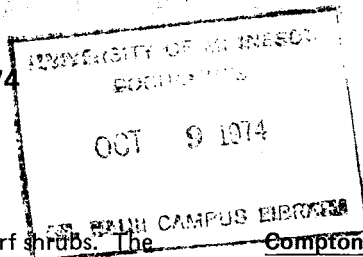


Arboretum Review



Dwarf shrubs



3.
ARBORETUM REVIEW NO. 20-1974

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There is a great deal of interest in dwarf shrubs. The architecture and height of our modern homes require them under windows and elsewhere in the landscape. Many shrubs offered by nurseries and garden centers outgrow the space in which they are planted in just a few years. This necessitates severe pruning, which destroys the natural form and beauty of the shrub.

Some of the dwarf shrubs that have been tested in the arboretum are described below:

Acer ginnala 'Durand Dwarf'. This compact form of Amur maple was discovered growing in Durand Eastman Park, Rochester, New York, before 1955. It has a dense, bushlike form and reaches a height of about 4 feet. The hardiness and fall color make this a very desirable shrub. Unfortunately, this plant is not commonly available in this area.

Amorpha canescens (Lead Plant). This native is suggested for dry sites. This plant, once common on our prairies, now is found along railroad tracks and country roads and in undisturbed prairies. The silvery foliage and the spikes of purplish-blue flowers make this an attractive plant. The plant height seldom exceeds 3 feet.

Amorpha nana (Dwarf Indigo Amorpha). This is another native amorpha found growing in dry sites from Saskatchewan to Iowa and Colorado. The small leaves are dark green. The plants seldom exceed 2 feet in height. A plant in the arboretum is doing well.

Berberis thunbergii 'Crimson Pygmy'. This dwarf form of the Japanese barberry produces a low mound that seldom gets over a foot tall in our climate. There is usually some tip kill, and this limits the height. The new leaves are a bright red, and the color is more brilliant when the plants are grown in full sun. This is a delightful small shrub and can be mass planted for a ground cover effect. Plant in a sheltered spot where there will be good snow cover.

Buxus microphylla koreana (Korean Boxwood). This is the hardiest of the boxwoods and appears to do well in protected sites in southeastern Minnesota. We have a 20 year old plant at the Horticultural Research Center that has a spread of about 3 feet. Several hedges on the St. Paul campus are at least 10 years old, and plantings in the arboretum are of a similar age. This plant tolerates some shade and filtered winter sun will help to reduce winter burn on the foliage. The leaves on most selections turn an olive green in the fall but green up when warm weather returns in the spring. The cultivar "Wintergreen" retains its green color throughout the winter.

Caragana aurantiaca (Dwarf Peashrub). This is a compact form of caragana that seldom exceeds 3 feet in height. The orange-yellow flowers in late May are quite showy. A good shrub for a dry, sunny location.

Caragana frutex 'Globosa'. This is a dwarf, globe form of the Russian pea shrub. Dark green foliage and compact form are its chief attributes. This can be used for a low hedge that will require little or no pruning. Leaf spot late in the season can be a problem.

Comptonia peregrina (Sweetfern). This member of the sweet gale family is native on acid, sandy, and peaty soils. Unfortunately, this desirable plant is difficult to transplant, and this limits its use. Nurserymen should try growing it in containers. The aromatic, fern-like foliage is most attractive. The ultimate size will vary with soil fertility, but on sandy soils it seldom gets more than 2 feet tall. Our plants in the arboretum are doing well on a soil that is nearly neutral in pH.

Cornus stolonifera 'Kelsey Dwarf'. This dwarf form of the redosier dogwood is the only true dwarf in this species. Unfortunately, this cultivar is very susceptible to leaf spot and, as a result, winter dieback is common and severe. After numerous attempts, we have given up on this selection. 'Isanti' is not a true dwarf but is an excellent cultivar of the redosier dogwood that is compact and seldom gets more than about 5 feet high. 'Isanti' is quite disease resistant and has good winter color.

Cotoneaster apiculata (Cranberry Cotoneaster). This is the hardiest of the dwarf cotoneasters. C. microphylla and C. adpressa lack hardiness. C. apiculata sometimes shows winter dieback and should be planted only in sheltered locations where it will have good snow cover. Like all cotoneasters it is subject to fireblight. The small leaves, arching branches, and showy red berries make this a desirable shrub if you have the right conditions.

Daphne cneorum (Rose Daphne). This is a very lovely daphne with flat clusters of fragrant, pink flowers. The plant is spreading with evergreen foliage. This plant likes a cool root zone and well drained soil. Some winter protection is required. This plant has not been long-lived with us.

Euonymus nanus turkestanicus (Turkestan Dwarf Euonymus). This is an upright form of the dwarf euonymus. Some tip pruning each spring will help to keep the plant compact. The slender, dark green leaves are semi-evergreen. During the summer, the large, showy winged fruits are excellent for flower arrangements. This can be used for a low, clipped hedge.

Forsythia x 'Arnold Dwarf'. This hybrid forsythia was introduced by the Arnold Arboretum in 1941. It is low and spreading and roots wherever the branches touch the ground. This makes it suitable for a woody ground cover on banks. This cultivar seldom blooms, and when it does, the flowers are not very showy.

Genista multibracteata. This is the only one of the genistas or gorses that has shown any degree of hardiness. Our original plants were grown from seed obtained from Leningrad, USSR. The seedlings are quite variable, suggesting a possible hybrid origin. Like most summer flowering shrubs, the fruiting tips of the branches show some winter dieback. We have had best results by cutting the entire plant back to within about 6 inches of the ground each spring. Yellow, pea-like flowers form on the new growth in late June. The leaves retain their green color well into winter.

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Hypericum kalmianum (Kalm's St. Johnswort). This is one of the few shrubby hypericums that have shown any degree of hardiness. The plants seldom get more than 2 feet tall and are covered with small, yellow flowers in July. Each spring the fruiting tips of the branches should be cut back.

Ledum groenlandicum (Labrador Tea). This native of acid, boggy soil is very hardy and attractive when in full bloom. Do not attempt to grow this plant unless you have a cool, wet, boggy site.

Kalmia polifolia (Bog Laurel). This is a beautiful native that is closely related to the mountain laurel of the east. The pink flowers open in June and are most attractive. The narrow, evergreen leaves add winter interest. Like the Labrador tea, this plant does best in cool, acid, boggy soil.

Lonicera xylosteum nana 'Emerald Mound' (Emerald Mound Honeysuckle). This is a compact form of the European fly honeysuckle. Plants were first observed at the Morton Arboretum near Chicago. Propagating wood was obtained, and a local nursery is propagating and selling plants under the name of Emerald Mound. A mature specimen will be 5 or 6 feet wide and only a few feet tall. The foliage is dark green.

Mahonia repens (Creeping Mahonia). Most of the mahonias or Oregon grapes have not proven hardy. A strain, collected near Boulder, Colorado, is doing quite well and should be tried in a variety of situations. The evergreen foliage that resembles holly, and the clusters of bright yellow flowers make this an attractive low shrub. Plant in a sheltered location where it will have good snow cover.

Philadelphus x 'Dwarf Minnesota Snowflake'. This dwarf form of the Minnesota Snowflake mockorange was selected and introduced by the Bailey Nurseries, Inc., St. Paul, Minnesota. The plants are low and compact and covered with large, fully double, white flowers in June. This is one of the few mockoranges that maintains a compact habit of growth.

Potentilla fruticosa (Bush Cinquefoil). Numerous cultivars of this fine ornamental are on the market. We have 31 of them in our collection. Plants vary in height from about 18 inches to more than 4 feet. Flowers resemble wild roses and vary from pure white to deep yellow. Gold Drop, Jackman, and Coronation Triumph are popular cultivars.

Rhododendron x 'PJM'. This hybrid rhododendron was selected from a seedling population resulting from a cross between R. carolinianum x R. mucronulatum. This is the hardiest of the

evergreen rhododendrons and blooms quite consistently each spring about the first of May. Unfortunately, several selections have been introduced under this designation.

Rhododendron poukhanense (Korean Azalea). This native of Korea is a low, mound-shaped shrub that produces attractive lavender flowers in mid-May. It is not one of the hardiest of the azaleas but due to its low height, normal winter snow protects the flower buds from extreme cold and we get fairly good bloom each spring.

Spiraea bullata (Crispleaf Spirea). This is a very dwarf spirea that is less than a foot tall. The dark green, crinkly leaves and the deep pink flowers that open through most of the summer make this a delightful little plant.

Spiraea japonica alpina (Alpine Japanese Spirea). This is another dwarf spirea that makes an attractive ground cover when the plants are spaced about 10 inches apart. The flowers are a pale pink color and not very showy.

Syringa meyeri (Dwarf Korean Lilac). This is the only lilac that approaches a dwarf size. The leaves are small and slightly crinkled. The flowers are a pale, lilac color and produced in small clusters. A good shrub for foundation plantings or wherever a small shrub is needed. Sometimes sold as S. palibiniana.

Viburnum opulus 'Nanum' (Dwarf European Highbush Cranberry). This shrub is very low and compact, seldom getting over 18 inches tall. This cultivar seldom flowers or fruits but does have attractive foliage when grown in partial shade.

Viburnum trilobum 'Compactum' (Compact American Highbush Cranberry). Several distinct types are on the market. The form that was selected in the east does not color well in the fall. A compact selection made by Bailey Nurseries, Inc., St. Paul, has a similar form and beautiful red foliage in the fall. Mature plant will probably be less than 5 feet. Similar in other respects to the species.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Roland H. Abraham, Director of Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108. We offer our programs and facilities to all people without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.

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