

## Finding New Plants - Their Development and Production

### Peter Catt

Liss Forest Nursery Limited, Petersfield Road, Greatham, Hampshire, GU33 6HA Great Britain

Having an interest in all plants, it's only natural to search out new ones. My nursery's reputation has been built on finding and introducing new plants both from home and abroad or reintroducing appealing plants largely out of cultivation.

Looking back over old catalogs, the first new plants I introduced to the U.K. were *Cornus florida* 'Barton White' and 'Sweetwater' and *Pieris* 'Brouwers Beauty'. These were all from the U.S.A.

At the same time I introduced the first plants of my own: *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Orangeade', an upright form with bright orange-red flowers and *P. fruticosa* 'Pretty Polly', a pink that holds its color in the sun better than most.

In 1984, I introduced *Spiraea japonica* 'Lisp', Golden Princess<sup>TM</sup> spirea, a chance seedling found in a local garden, but thought to be a cross between *S. japonica* 'Gold Flame' and *S. japonica* 'Little Princess'. This was shown at the Chelsea Flower Show by Blooms of Bressingham. This was the first plant I had protected by Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) that allow for a royalty to be paid on all cuttings rooted. Previously, any plants introduced had a basic label tag attached with the name of the plant, but we started producing color tags, bed labels, and posters to promote the plant and increase sales. This was the first plant we grew in excess of a few hundred.

The year 1986 was big for the nursery when again using Blooms of Bressingham to show the plant at Chelsea we introduced *Choisya ternata* 'Lich', Sundance<sup>TM</sup> choisya. It was shown on television on the morning of the show. This was an entirely new plant. *Choisya ternata*, Mexican orange blossom, has trifoliate, rich green leaves, is evergreen, and has sweetly scented white clusters of flowers. What I introduced was a form with bright yellow leaves. This plant is protected by PBR and I have a trademark on the name Sundance<sup>TM</sup> in Europe. We produced a wild-west style poster with the *Choisya* bursting through a wanted poster with the catchy phrase "Look out for Sundance". We started with 10,000 and every year more and more are grown by licensed growers in the U.K. and elsewhere.

We have introduced many plants since then including some I will show today like *Erica lusitanica* 'Sheffield Park'. This seedling from a famous garden in the South of England is much improved on its parent. The buds are red and the bells open a purer white.

We have been working closely with Briggs Nursery, Olympia, Washington, for a number of years and are now applying for European rights on their new *Daphne xburkwoodii* 'Moonlight'. It is a truly amazing plant having white foliage with a thin edge of green. For a plant of such variegation it is quite a strong grower and will undoubtedly become very popular.

Another interesting daphne is *Daphne odora* 'Geisha Girl' given to me by a Japanese friend. Its most unusual green and cream variegated leaves make it an outstanding shrub.

An exciting new plant from Taylor's Nursery, Raleigh, North Carolina is *Abelia* × *grandiflora* 'Sunrise' for which we are applying for E.U. protection. We are hoping through an agent to protect it also in many other countries. The abelias are popular hardy shrubs flowering mid through late summer, but with the clear yellow variegated leaves from spring to late summer before the yellow turns to flame red; it is a real winner.

*Euonymus fortunei* 'Harlequin' started life in Japan, went to the U.S.A., and we introduced it into the U.K. It is an attractive ground cover with white flecks on the green leaves.

*Spiraea japonica* 'Candle Light' has large soft-yellow leaves on a medium-sized shrub and is a perfect companion plant to *S. japonica* 'Fire Light', both of which I raised and introduced. The names enabled us to produce an attractive poster promoting the plants very well. While on the subject of spiraeas, I am cross pollinating *Spiraea japonica* 'Candle Light' and 'Fire Light' with *Spiraea japonica* var. *albiflora* to try to get white flowers on yellow or orange foliage.

*Cistus* 'Golden Treasure' was found at New Place Nurseries, Pulborough, Sussex, and introduced this year by John Hedger. It is a medium-sized shrub of upright habit. Sage-green leaves with an irregular margin of golden yellow becoming more prominent in late summer. The flowers are bright pink.

*Clerodendrum trichotomum* is not what could be called a good selling name, though in my opinion, it is a fine plant with its large felt-like leaves, scented white flowers and beautiful violet-blue berries. We have now introduced an excellent form we have called 'Carnival'. The leaves are big and variegated with creamy yellow and white.

My first selection of *Caryopteris* × *clandonensis* I've called 'First Choice'. With an upright habit, flowers are large, deep-blue and it starts to flower earlier and carries on for longer than most.

I have introduced three lavateras of my own: 'Ice Cool' (white), 'Candy Floss' (pink), and 'Burgundy Wine' (light purple). *Lavatera* 'Candy Floss' and 'Burgundy Wine' were recently awarded an Award of Garden Merit after trials at the R.H.S. Gardens.

On a trip to Belgium I bought some *Cornus kousa* cultivars not knowing their names. One that has shown up well this summer is *Cornus kousa* 'Bultinck's Beauty' with its white-splashed foliage. It will be popular in the U.K. for summer sales.

*Vitis coignetii* 'Claret Cloak' is a selection from a batch of seedlings on a local nursery. The young leaves are the color of a good claret wine. It is a healthy grower, putting on several feet of growth each year and the autumn fall colors are beautiful. This plant has U.K. PBR.

Lastly, I would like to mention *Nyssa sylvatica* 'Wisley Bonfire'. This particular tree has been growing in the R.H.S. Gardens for as long as I can remember. Every year the autumn colors are superb. Now it has been named and I am the first to offer it for sale.