



## RHS Plant Assessments

### *Pittosporum tenuifolium* hybrids & cultivars

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Supplementary to RHS Plant Trials and Awards

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## *Pittosporum tenuifolium* in the wild and cultivation

The Woody Plant Committee, which is responsible for judging nursery exhibits and individual plants of hardy woody trees and shrubs at RHS Shows, held a special meeting on 25 November 2003 looking at the cultivars and hybrids of *Pittosporum tenuifolium*. The committee assembled cut material representing almost every cultivar available in Britain, contributed by committee members as well as a number of nurseries, gardens and individuals. The committee were very fortunate that Graham Hutchins of County Park Nursery, who specialises in New Zealand plants, was able to attend. He has studied *Pittosporum* cultivars and has been able to sort out some of the confusion of plants and their names in cultivation in this country. He described the history and characteristics of the cultivars displayed, many of which have been introduced by him as selections from plants raised from seed collected in New Zealand or from plants on his nursery.

Many cultivars previously assigned to *P. tenuifolium* are now thought to be hybrids with other species because of the flower structure, and the hairiness of stems and leaves.

After the meeting the material was photographed, and samples taken to augment the RHS Herbarium with correctly named specimens. The remainder were displayed for the public during the RHS London Show.

### ***Pittosporum tenuifolium***

In its native New Zealand, where it is known by the Maori names kohuhu or kohukohu, *Pittosporum tenuifolium* is an evergreen tree reaching to about 10m or so in height with almost black branches. The elliptic, glossy leaves are a rather pale green and usually have a wavy margin. The late spring flowers are small and a dark brownish-purple colour so they are not very showy but they have a delicious honey scent, especially in the evening. Plants can be found with hermaphrodite flowers, or separate male and female flowers or with male or female flowers only. Some cultivars are very similar and only readily distinguished by the sex of the flower. The species grows wild in the coastal and lower mountain forests of both the North and South islands up to an altitude of 900m. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* is sometimes grown under the cultivar name 'Nigricans' because of its black stems.

Some botanists have included the larger *P. colensoi* as a subspecies of *P. tenuifolium*. Its larger and more leathery leaves with a paler midrib and a more or less flat margin distinguish this species. It also grows on the North and South Islands from sea level to about 1000m. Many plants in cultivation appear to be hybrids between these two species.

Far right: *Pittosporum* 'Crinkles'

Right: *Pittosporum* 'Garnettii'

Front cover: *Pittosporum* 'Garnettii'

(Photos by Wendy Wesley)





## How to use hardy *Pittosporum* in the garden

*P. tenuifolium* and its cultivars and hybrids grow well in any fertile, well-drained soil in the milder areas of the UK, especially in the south and west and also thrive in coastal areas. In colder gardens, they may be grown in a sheltered position or on a south or west-facing wall. They make good specimen plants and the smaller cultivars such as 'Peter Pan' and 'Pompom' can be grown in containers for patio decoration.

They respond well to clipping making useful hedging plants and if necessary can be pruned back hard. The smaller leaved types can also be used for topiary. Some of the larger cultivars will make an effective evergreen screen. Variegated cultivars will lighten up a dark corner, especially 'Irene Paterson' with white-spotted foliage. The foliage of coloured and variegated cultivars may change through the year. The leaves of many purple-leaved cultivars for example, emerge green contrasting with the dark purple of the mature leaves while many yellow-leaved plants become greener as they age.

Many plants have black or very dark stems and these make a good foil for the foliage. Cut branches are very long-lasting in water, making this a useful floristry plant. The paler green and more crinkled leaves are most popular and some cultivars are grown commercially for this purpose in Cornwall, Ireland and The Netherlands.

Many cultivars and hybrids have been raised as chance seedlings, deliberate crosses or sports resulting in a wide selection of leaf variation and plant size for different positions in the garden. The best of these have been given the Award of Garden Merit as good, reliable, garden plants.





## AGM cultivars

The Award of Garden Merit has been given to the species, *P. tenuifolium* AGM (H3) 1993 and five selections or hybrids. All are recognised as fulfilling the criteria with a good habit and attractive foliage throughout the season.

Left: *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Stirling Gold' (Photos by Wendy Wesley)

### AGM criteria

The Award of Garden Merit requires a plant:

- to be excellent for garden decoration
- to be available from nurseries
- to be of good constitution
- not to require specialist care
- not to be susceptible to pest or disease
- not to be subject to reversion

H3 indicates that plants are hardy outside in some regions or particular situations.



**'Garnettii' AGM (H3) 1993**

A large female shrub or small tree with black stems and broad flat, grey-green leaves with a narrow irregular white margin, becoming pink tinged in winter.



**'Irene Paterson' AGM (H3) 1993**

A bushy male plant with reddish brown stems and undulate, ovate leaves spotted and blotched with creamy white which are almost white when young but almost totally green on maturity.



**'Silver Queen' AGM (H3) 1993**

A large female plant with dark stems and almost flat, pale silvery-green leaves with an irregular creamy-white margin. It is similar to 'Garnettii' but has a narrower leaf without a pink tinge in winter.



**'Tom Thumb' AGM (H3) 1993**

A dwarf compact hermaphrodite plant with dark brown stems and small, elliptic, very undulate, dark reddish purple leaves. The opening leaves are green making a striking contrast with the older foliage.



**'Warnham Gold' AGM (H3) 1993**

A small open male tree with dark stems and pale green undulate leaves turning bright golden-yellow in winter. Best in shade.

## A selection of cultivars of hardy *Pittosporum*

Name	Margin	Other
<b>Leaves with yellow variegated centre</b>		
'Abbotsbury Gold'	Undulate	Leaf dark green in winter
'Eila Keightley' (syn. 'Sunburst')	Slightly undulate	Very broad leaves
'Essex'	Undulate	Similar to 'Abbotsbury Gold' but brighter foliage
'Golden Princess'	Very undulate	Bright yellow centre becoming green on maturity
'Gold Star'	Slightly undulate	Stems red
'Limelight' (1)	Flat	Leaves large, hermaphrodite flowers; stems brownish-green
'Loxhill Gold'	Undulate	Similar to 'Tresederi' but with darker leaves; stems brown
'Margaret Turnbull'	Undulate	Probably a hybrid of <i>P. colensoi</i>
'Stirling Gold'	Undulate	Leaves small; stems purple
'Tandara Gold' (2)	Slightly undulate	Leaves very small; stems brown
'Tresederi'	Undulate	Stems brown; similar to 'Abbotsbury Gold' but with narrower leaves
<b>Leaves with variegated margins</b>		
'Bicton Silver' (3)	Flat	Leaves light green, margin silvery-white
'Deborah'	Almost flat	Leaves small, margin creamy-yellow
'Elizabeth' (4)	Flat	Leaves grey-green, margin white flushed pink in winter
'Garnettii' AGM	Flat	Leaves broad, grey-green, margin white
'Katie'	Slightly undulate	Leaves small, margin white
'Marjory Channon'	Flat	Similar to 'Silver Queen' but with smaller leaves
'Mystery'	Flat	('Variegatum'); stems green, leaves with white margin
'Saundersii'	Flat	Leaves grey-green, margin white
'Silver Magic' (5)	Almost flat	Leaves small, margin creamy-yellow flushed pink
'Silver Queen' AGM	Flat	Leaves grey-green, margin white
'Wendle Channon' (6)	Slightly undulate	Leaves small to medium, margin creamy-yellow
<b>Leaves with white blotched variegation</b>		
'Irene Paterson' AGM	Undulate	Leaves blotched & speckled white; stems reddish-brown



Small leaves    largest leaves under 3cm  
 Large leaves    largest leaves over 5cm long



Name	Margin	Other
<b>Leaves green, not variegated</b>		
'Arundel Green' (7)	Undulate	Green elliptic leaves; stems red
'County Park Green'	Undulate	Dwarf plant
'Craxten'	Undulate	Dark green leaves; stems purple
'Crinkles'	Undulate	Small plant with small, dark green leaves
'Dixie' (8)	Slightly undulate	Leaves small, grey-green
'French Lace'	Undulate	Leaves grey-green, small
'Green Elf'	Undulate	Dwarf plant
'Humpty Dumpty'	Slightly undulate	Dwarf plant with small leaves
'James Stirling'	Slightly undulate	Leaves small, grey-green
'Mount Cook'	More or less flat	Leaves dark green
'Silver Princess'	Undulate	Leaves grey-green
'Silver Sheen'	More or less flat	Stems dark reddish-purple
'Tiki'	Flat	Leaves small; young stems green
<b>Leaves purple, not variegated</b>		
'County Park Dwarf'	Undulate	Dwarf plant
'Dark Delight' (9)	Undulate	Large plant smaller leaves than 'Purpureum'
'Nutty's Leprechaun'	Undulate	Dwarf almost prostrate plant
'Purple Princess'	Undulate	Large plant, female
'Purpureum'	Undulate	Large plant, male
'Tom Thumb' AGM (10)	Undulate	Dwarf plant
<b>Leaves yellow, not variegated</b>		
'Peter Pan'	Undulate	Dwarf plant with yellowish-green leaves
'Warnham Gold' AGM	Undulate	Leaves golden-yellow, especially in winter

## Descriptions of some hardy *Pittosporum* cultivars



### 'Abbotsbury Gold' (1)

A large, strong-growing female cultivar with black to dark brown stems and undulate, glossy green ovate leaves with a yellow central variegation, more or less green in winter. A sport, probably of 'Silver Queen', raised at Abbotsbury Gardens about 1970. It may revert.

### 'Arundel Green'

A strong-growing female cultivar with dark red stems and elliptic green, undulate leaves. It is probably a hybrid of *P. tenuifolium*.

### 'Bicton Silver' (2)

A large strong-growing male cultivar with black to dark brown stems and flat, green leaves with a white marginal variegation. A sport of 'Tresederi' raised at Bicton College. Similar to 'Silver Queen' but with male flowers and more silvery-white margined leaves.

### 'County Park Dwarf'

A dwarf male plant with dark stems and undulate dark purple leaves which are initially pale green. A seedling of 'Tom Thumb', raised at County Park Nursery in 1998 from which it differs in its more undulate leaves and its smaller, neater and more compact habit. 'Nutty's



Leprechaun', from Mr Nutty of Ireland is similar but with more open growth and a semi-prostrate habit.

### 'County Park Green'

Similar to 'County Park Dwarf' but with green leaves. This plant is sometimes sold incorrectly as 'County Park Dwarf'.

### 'Craxten' (3)

A fast growing, erect female tree with dark purplish brown stems and slightly undulate, dark green leaves. It makes a useful hedge or screening plant. Raised at County Park Nursery in 1980, this is a hybrid between *P. crassifolium* and *P. tenuifolium* 'Variegatum'.

### 'Crinkles' (4)

A small, compact female cultivar with thick, black stems and small, leathery, dark green, strongly undulate leaves. It was raised at Bicton College and is probably a hybrid between *P. colensoi* and *P. tenuifolium*.

### 'Dark Delight' (5)

A fast-growing male cultivar with black stems and purple undulate leaves. This cultivar is considered an improvement on 'Purpureum' with a more compact habit and smaller



leaves. It is a seedling of 'Margaret Turnbull', and was raised at County Park Nursery in 1998.

### 'Deborah'

(syn. 'Deborah') This is not a strong-growing cultivar but very distinct with its small, ovate more or less flat, green leaves with a broad creamy-yellow margin becoming white, tinged with pink at maturity. It is somewhat similar to 'Elizabeth' and was raised in Auckland, New Zealand

### 'Dixie'

See under 'James Stirling'

### 'Eila Keightley'

(syn. 'Eilia Keightley', 'Sunburst') A large, upright strong-growing shrub with black to dark brown stems and small to medium, very broad green leaves with a few undulations and an irregular yellowish-green central variegation, eventually becoming totally green. A sport of 'Rotundifolium', (which has leaves broadly margined with cream-yellow and was found as a sport of *P. tenuifolium* in New Zealand), this cultivar was raised by Robinsons Nursery in New Zealand in 1964.





**'Elizabeth' (6)**

A strong-growing male cultivar with dark purple stems and light green leaves with an undulate cream margin becoming pinkish in winter. This is presumed to be a sport of 'Silver Queen', raised before 1997. It is rather similar to 'Deborah' but with a longer leaf and a stronger, taller habit.

**'Essex'**

A large female cultivar with black stems and undulate green leaves with a yellow central variegation, becoming green on maturity. It was raised at County Park Nursery in 1988 as a seedling of 'Silver Queen'. It is similar to 'Abbotsbury Gold' although it has a brighter, larger and more undulate leaf.

**'French Lace'**

A very upright plant with purple stems and small, broad, undulate, grey-green leaves which become purplish in winter. It is not dissimilar to 'James Stirling' and is thought to have been raised in New Zealand.

**'Garnettii' (7)**

**AGM (H3) 1993**

A large female shrub or small tree with black stems and broad flat, grey-green leaves with a narrow irregular white margin, becoming pink tinged in winter. It is similar to 'Silver Queen'



but with a broader leaf. A seedling of *P. tenuifolium* probably crossed with *P. colensoi*, which was named after Arthur Garnett who first discovered it in a New Zealand nursery before 1957.

**'Gold Star'**

A male cultivar with reddish stems and small, rounded, slightly undulate leaves with a central greenish yellow variegation and a very short leaf stalk.

**'Golden Princess' (8)**

An erect female cultivar with dark stems and deeply undulate, elliptic, green leaves with a bright yellow central variegation when young, becoming green on maturity. A cultivar raised at County Park Nursery Gardens from a sport of 'Silver Queen' in 1992.

**'Green Elf'**

A dwarf male plant with almost black stems and small to medium, light green, elliptic leaves with a few undulations.

**'Humpty Dumpty' (9)**

A dwarf cultivar with black stems and small, flat or slightly undulate, broad, light green leaves which tend to turn purple in winter. It was raised at County Park Nursery from seed collected near Mount Cook in New Zealand in 1997



**'Irene Paterson' (10)**

**AGM (H3) 1993**

A bushy male plant with reddish brown stems and undulate, ovate leaves spotted and blotched with creamy white which are almost white when young but almost totally green on maturity. Less hardy than some cultivars but the foliage is quite distinct. Found at Port Hill in New Zealand by G Paterson and named for his wife in about 1970.

**'James Stirling' (11)**

A rather erect female plant with purple stems. Leaves slightly undulate, small, grey-green and purple tinged beneath. Originated in the garden of James Stirling in New Zealand. 'Dixie' is somewhat similar with very small grey-green almost flat leaves.

**'Katie'**

A bushy plant with small, broad, slightly undulate, green leaves, with a clearly defined creamy-white margin. This cultivar is similar to plants grown for foliage for the florist trade. A new cultivar of uncertain origin.

**'Limelight' (12)**

A bushy hermaphrodite plant with greenish brown stems with elliptic, almost flat leaves, yellow green with a darker green margin and paler midrib.



## Descriptions of some *Pittosporum* cultivars



**'Loxhill Gold'**  
see under 'Tresederi'

### **'Margaret Turnbull' (13)**

(syn. 'John Flanagan')

A bushy female cultivar with bright yellow green leaves with dark green undulate margin. A cultivar raised in New Zealand by Alistair Turnbull; named after his wife, and introduced into this country by Graham Hutchins in 1981. It is possibly a hybrid or form of *P. colensoi*.

### **'Marjory Channon' (14)**

(syn. 'Marjorie Channon')

A bushy female plant with black stems and flat white-margined leaves originating from New Zealand. Similar to 'Silver Queen' but with slightly smaller leaves.

### **'Mount Cook'**

A strong growing plant with almost black stems and dark green leaves. Raised by Graham Hutchins from seed collected on Mount Cook, New Zealand 1996.

### **'Mystery' (15)**

A large male plant with greyish-green stems and elliptic more or less flat, grey-green leaves with a creamy-yellow margin. This is the plant long grown as *P. tenuifolium* 'Variegatum'. It is of



uncertain origin but it is almost certainly a hybrid and the name 'Mystery' has been proposed by Graham Hutchins.

### **'Nutty's Leprechaun'** see under 'County Park Dwarf'

### **'Peter Pan' (16)**

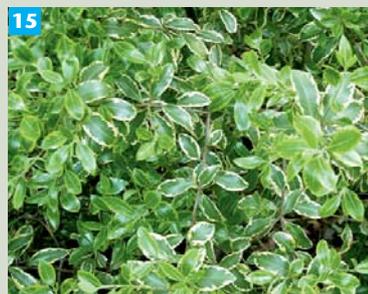
A dwarf compact plant with small, yellowish-green, undulate leaves which are a consistently good colour. Raised at County Park Nursery in 1997 from a seedling of 'Margaret Turnbull'.

### **'Purple Princess'**

A slow growing female plant with dark brownish-black stems and undulate dark purple leaves. It is similar to 'Dark Delight' but with female flowers and slightly larger, more undulate leaves. It was selected as a seedling of 'Margaret Turnbull' at County Park Nursery 1998.

### **'Purpureum' (17)**

(plants grown as 'Atropurpureum' are probably the same). A large, tree-like, male plant with dark stems and oblong, undulate leaves opening pale green and changing from bronze to purple. The leaves are a good purple in deep shade but more mottled in strong light. It is said to have been found in Melbourne, Australia.



**'Rotundifolium'**  
(syn. 'Gloria Robinson') see under 'Eila Keightley'

### **'Saundersii'**

A bushy plant with dark stems and almost flat, rounded, grey-green leaves edged white, turning pink, especially in winter. Raised in New Zealand by FJ Sanders from seed of 'Garnettii' but said to be a more compact plant. 'Victoria' is somewhat similar but with smaller slightly undulate leaves.

### **'Silver Magic' (18)**

('Colour Magic' may be another name for the same plant) An erect plant with black stems and small, almost flat, silvery-green leaves with pink-tinged cream margins. Similar to 'James Stirling' in its erect habit but with more silvery-green leaves.

### **'Silver Princess'**

(syn 'Princess')

A bushy female plant with dark stems and slightly undulate silvery-green leaves becoming pink-tinged in winter. This was a seedling of 'Silver Queen' raised by County Park Nursery in 1988 and similar to the parent but with a neater habit and brighter foliage, tinged pink in winter.





**'Silver Queen' (19)**  
AGM (H3) 1993

A large female plant with dark stems and almost flat, pale silvery-green leaves with an irregular creamy-white margin. It is similar to 'Garnettii' but has a narrower leaf without a pink tinge in winter. It was raised at Slieve Donard Nursery before 1914 and is possibly a hybrid with *P. colensoi*.

**'Silver Sheen'**

A rather open male plant with dark reddish-purple stems and very small, pale green ovate leaves with a greyish-silver sheen. It is a useful cultivar for flower arranging. Origin uncertain.

**'Stirling Gold'**

A rather erect female plant with purple stems and slightly undulate, small, green leaves with a bright yellow-green to gold centre, often turning purplish underneath in winter. A sport of 'James Stirling' from Auckland, New Zealand, similar in shape and habit but with variegated leaves.

**'Tandara Gold' (20)**

A bushy plant with thin brown stems and small, very broad, slightly undulate, leaves with bright yellow-veined centres and dark green margins. Origin uncertain.



**'Tom Thumb' (21)**  
AGM (H3) 1993

A dwarf compact hermaphrodite plant with dark brown stems and small, elliptic, very undulate, dark reddish purple leaves. The opening leaves are green making a striking contrast with the older foliage. It is a dwarf seedling of 'Purpureum', which was selected in New Zealand c.1960.

**'Tiki'**

A bushy male plant with stems which are green, not black, when young and small, flat, ovate, pale green leaves. Origin uncertain.

**'Tresederi' (22)**

A fast growing erect male plant with brown stems and elliptic, undulate, yellow-green leaves with irregular dark green deeply undulate margin becoming darker green in winter. Similar to 'Abbotsbury Gold' but with narrower, more undulate, leaves. This is a seedling of 'Silver Queen' from Treseders Nursery in Cornwall.

'Loxhill Gold' is somewhat similar but with darker green leaves with a yellow central variegation.



**'Variegatum'**  
see under 'Mystery'

**'Victoria'**

see under 'Saundersii'.

**'Warnham Gold' (23)**

AGM (H3) 1993

A small, open, male tree with dark stems and pale green undulate leaves turning bright golden-yellow in winter. The leaves may be scorched if grown in full sun. Raised at Warnham Court in Sussex around 1959.

**'Wendle Channon' (24)**

(syn. 'Wendell Channon')

A bushy male plant with black stems and undulate, small to medium, elliptic to ovate green leaves with yellow margins fading to cream. Raised in New Zealand.



## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Graham Hutchins who owns County Park Nursery and has done an enormous amount of work introducing plants from New Zealand to British gardens. He is especially well known for his work with *Hebe* and holds the National Collection of *Coprosma*. His booklet on *Pittosporum*, available from County Park Nursery, has been a major resource in the compilation of this bulletin. Thanks also to James Armitage for checking the text and images; all photos are by Wendy Wesley.

## Woody Plant Committee

(Previously Floral Committee B) The Woody Plant Committee is responsible for judging individual woody plants for exhibition awards and for the Award of Garden Merit. They are also responsible for judging trade exhibits which include hardy woody plants at RHS Shows. The committee also confirms the work of the Woody Plant Trials Sub-committee. In addition, special meetings are held to look at specific groups of plants. Genera that have been considered include *Azara*, *Indigofera*, *Eucryphia*, *Magnolia stellata* and fruits of species of *Rosa*. The results of several of these meetings are available on the RHS web-site, at [rhs.org.uk/plants/plant\\_groups](http://rhs.org.uk/plants/plant_groups)

## The Committee on *Pittosporum* Day comprised:

**Chairman:** R A E Herbert  
**Vice Chairmen:** C P Ellis; R J Evison;  
C R Lancaster

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Miss S Andrews	W L Banks
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## Suppliers

Suppliers of *Pittosporum* may be found in the *RHS Plant Finder* but all the nurseries that contributed to the Floral Committee Day have a good selection:

County Park Nursery, Essex Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 3BU (no mail order)

Burcoose Nurseries, Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ

Hillier Garden Centres, The Stables, Ampfield House, Ampfield, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 9BQ

Pennard Plants, 3 The Gardens, East Pennard, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6TU

Plants may also be seen at the National Collection of *Pittosporum* which is held by Bicton College at East Budleigh. Budleigh Salterton, Devon EX9 7BY.

## RHS Herbarium

The RHS Herbarium keeps records of cultivars as dried specimens with detailed descriptions and photographic images. This forms an important reference for the horticultural industry. Any new cultivars are highlighted and a Standard specimen is preserved and described.

The RHS Herbarium, stored at RHS Garden Wisley, is the largest active horticultural herbarium in the world. At present the collection contains about 70,000 herbarium specimens and over 55,000 images of plants. Material is actively collected from a wide spectrum of sources including RHS plant assessments.



Herbarium specimen Barry Phillips

## The Royal Horticultural Society

The RHS is the UK's leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. Its charitable work includes providing expert advice and information, advancing horticulture, training the next generation of gardeners, helping school children learn about plants, and conducting research into plants, pests and environmental issues affecting gardeners. The RHS AGM plant trial scheme is an important part of this work.

The RHS receives no government grants and for every pound received from members' subscriptions we need to raise more than twice as much again to fund our charitable work. We also rely on donations and sponsorship to supplement income from our garden operations, flower shows, shops and plant centres.

## RHS Plant Assessments

RHS Plant Committees have the knowledge, experience and ability to bring together examples of relevant plant material in order to assess their characteristics, provenance, performance in a garden situation and discuss correct nomenclature. The findings from these assessments are a valuable resource for horticulturists and the general gardener.

More information on the plant assessments can be found on: [www.rhs.org.uk/plants/plant\\_groups](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/plant_groups)

## RHS Bulletins

**Canna:** September 2003  
**Daisies** (yellow perennial): September 2004  
**Delphinium:** June 2004  
**Fuchsia** (hardy): December 2005  
**Geraniums** (hardy) Stage 1: June 2005  
**Geraniums** (hardy) Stage 2: June 2006  
**Hyacinthaceae** (little blue bulbs): September 2005  
**Lavenders** (hardy): July 2003  
**Miscanthus:** October 2004  
**Potatoes** (salad): November 2004  
**Potentilla** (shrubby): July 2002  
**Saxifrages** (silver): May 2005  
**Rhododendron yakushimanum** (and hybrids): May 2006  
**Spiraea japonica** (with coloured leaves): November 2003

These bulletins can be viewed at a larger size on the RHS Website:

[www.rhs.org.uk/plants/trials\\_bulletins.asp](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/trials_bulletins.asp)

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