

Promising New Plants from Japan[©]

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Plant evaluation and new introductions have been an integral part of our nursery for some years. In Fall 1996 the late Dr. J.C. Raulston arranged for a group of Japanese nurserymen to tour our nursery on their way from Tennessee to Raleigh. Japan had always been a place of fascination and interest for me in the plant world and this allowed me to make some initial contacts there. Other members of our group had contacts as well making our first visit go fairly smooth. Fall of 2000 was the first time our group from the Southeastern United States toured Japanese nurseries, garden centers, and arboreta, mainly in the Kawaguchi City area northwest of Tokyo. In this area there are around 1,000 nurseries according to the local nurserymen. We have also visited the Kyoto area, Nagoya, Niigata, and as far south as Osaka.

A group of Japanese nurserymen helped arrange our trip, and we in turn do the same for them when they visit the southeastern United States. On our trips we are able to collect plants in effect from the plant collectors there. In the following years our group has remained pretty much the same. Several members of our group visit there at least once a year.

Out of the plants collected, we estimate 1–2 plants per hundred will make it through our evaluation process and into production. Generally it takes about 3–5 years before we have available plants to sell. The following plants (Table 1) are some our group has collected. Some have made their way into the market, some never will, and some will be collector plants only.

Table 1. Some plants the group has collected in Japan.

<i>Callicarpa dichotoma</i> , J 06#1	Green leaves speckled with white variegation; purple stems on new growth.
<i>Ternstroemia</i>	We have two new forms: one with oblong leaves that have white variegation and orange new growth, the other is creamy variegated with pinkish-red new growth.
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> , fastigiate form	Very upright and skinny growing.
<i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>	Flushes almost solid white then hardens back to green.
<i>Poncirus trifoliata</i> , with a narrow leaf	Most narrow leaf form we have ever seen.
<i>Hydrangea serrata</i>	With narrow golden leaves.

Table 1. (Continued)

<i>Rhododendron</i> , variegated leaf azalea	Azalea with green leaves that have broad white margins.
<i>Sedum</i> , golden color	Has very small foliage.
<i>Osmanthus heterophyllus</i> 'Sasaba'	Dwarf form, more compact than parent plant.
<i>Rhaphiolepis indica</i> , Shibamichi's selection	With red new leaves, new growth is similar to <i>Photinia</i> ; the foliage is clean for us.
<i>Chionanthus retusus</i> 'Tokyo Tower'	Strongly upright cultivar that reaches 15 ft height and only 3-ft spread with glossy dark green leaves.
<i>Mahonia confusa</i> 'Nari Hira'	Long, thin leaflets create a more fine texture.
<i>Ardisia japonica</i> 'Hakuou' (White King)	White leaves with a white margin, making leaf completely white sometimes.
<i>Camellia sasanqua</i>	Yellow-leaf form with pink flowers.
<i>Camellia</i> 'Sake Cup'	Leaves are so cupped they will hold water.
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Bonton'	Leaves are lobed at the ends with what appears as a second leaf protruding.
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Koshi-no-Fubuki'	Dark green leaves with broad white margins or speckled green and white margins.
<i>Illicium anisatum</i> 'Deep Purple'	Dark purple new leaves turn to green when mature.
<i>Illicium anisatum</i> 'Purple Haze'	Dark purple new leaves turn to green then mature with light variegation.
<i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i> 'Royal Flush'	New leaves flush fluorescent orange-red.
<i>Albizia julibrissin</i> 'Pendula'	A weeping mimosa that grows prostrate if left untaked.
<i>Edgeworthia</i> , variegated leaf form	Some leaves are yellow with green mid vein and others are light green with dark green in the middle.