

New Plant Introductions for Mid and Northern Europe®

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INTRODUCTION

With my brother, I own a 5-ha nursery called Wim & Alphons van der Poel in Hazerswoude near the famous Dutch nursery town of Boskoop. My father was a nurseryman, so were my grandfathers, and our family business has been running since 1887.

My brother and I were brought up on the nursery and in those days it was quite common to help in the nursery at a young age, starting with weeding and later planting. As there are about 900 nurseries in the area I soon began to work at another nursery during the summer holidays. After completing high school, I went on to attend the Boskoop Nursery School, which had an emphasis on practical training, with half days at school and half days as an apprentice at a local nursery. I also worked in Germany and England to learn more about the nursery industry and to learn the language and customs. With my brother Alphons we took over from my father.

Plants are my passion and I am a member of various botanical clubs and inevitably became involved with finding and introducing new plants.

About 16 years ago my wife and I founded Valkplant, which is an agency for new plants and undertakes all the necessary patent work. It now is run by my wife and my oldest daughter, Saskia. My role is to provide advice about which new plants are worth covering by plant breeders' rights or patents as well as looking for licensees.

The most important thing is that the plant is a good, innovative, and above all a healthy garden plant that provides real satisfaction to the final consumer.

Valkplant now represents a number of important breeders and companies and their new plants under the brand Valkplant Innovative Plants (VIP).

COLD HARDINESS

As this paper is about new plants for mid and northern Europe, cold hardiness is an important consideration. Most of the plants we introduce are suitable for the climate of this region.

Cold hardiness is not an absolute but is influenced by many botanical and environmental factors, including:

- The species and geographical origin or provenance.
- The soil type.
- Proximity to the sea.
- The way the plants are grown.
- How and when the plants have stopped growing in the autumn.
- The situation in which the plant is finally been planted (e.g., south-facing slope or north-facing wall).

For example, I have in my garden a *Clematis cirrhosa* var. *balearica*. This species is native to the Balearic Isles in the western Mediterranean where the climate corresponds to U.S.A. Hardiness Zone 8–9. So the species is classified as being not

hardy for the Netherlands and generally this is true, but it was planted in my garden on a very sandy soil and facing east. It has been there for the last 20 years and we have had winter temperatures of -20°C . *Hebe* 'Rosie' is another example which is generally regarded as not hardy at all. However, 15 years ago I gave a plant to my sister-in-law who lives near Orleans, France (Hardiness Zone 7). The ground is a heavy clay and the summers are very warm. So far it has grown and flowered well each year. In both cases I think the soil type and when the plant stops growing has influenced their hardiness.

Unfortunately, in most European countries, Hardiness Zones are rarely used in publications and catalogues. To my knowledge only in Norway, Sweden, and Finland is it common practice. While it may be understandable that growers are wary about making definitive statements about hardiness, due to the environmental influences described above, I believe we should be using the concept of hardiness zones a lot more for the benefit of knowledgeable landscapers and gardeners.

Over the years many new plants being sold in Europe have come from Australia and New Zealand. Many of these are unsuitable for the climate in mid and northern Europe. Many of these plants are marketed in Europe but mainly for impulse sales and this is fine as long as the customer understands they may have a limited life time in the garden.

The majority of Valkplants introductions however are able to stand colder winters.

NEW INTRODUCTIONS

The following taxa have been introduced by Valkplants over the past few years or are to be introduced soon. The list includes a couple of old but hardy plants which deserve to be more widely used. The hardiness zone is given at the end of each plant's entry.

Abelia mosanensis. A very hardy plant with very nice flowers, better known in the U.S.A. but hardly used in Europe. Zone 6.

***Acer campestre* 'EcoSentry'**. Upright field maple raised by Andre van Nijnatten. Selected for its columnar growth and resistance to mildew. Zone 4.

***Acer palmatum* 'Firecracker'**. A seedling of 'Tamukeyama' raised by Cor van Gelderen. This red Japanese maple looks very much like *Acer palmatum* 'Crimson Queen'. The reason we introduced this plant is because it will grow in 18 months into a nice 30- to 40-cm saleable plants. Other cultivars will not perform in this way. Zones 5–8.

***Acer palmatum* 'Pévé Ollie'**. An upright Japanese Maple raised by Piet Vergeldt. It has very thick branches even at the early stages of growth. The young growth is also very attractive. Zones 5–8.

***Amelanchier alnifolia* 'Obelisk'**. Raised by the late Baroness de Belder, owner of the Kalmthout Arboretum at Hemelrijk. I came across this plant while on a trip with some witch hazel enthusiasts (including IPPS members Chris Lane and Chris Sanders) to see the witch hazels in her collection. We saw a very beautiful columnar tree and from a distance we did not recognise it. Mrs. de Belder told us she had some seedlings of *Amelanchier alnifolia* and that this was the one she especially liked. The tree was about 9 m tall and 1.25 m spread. It is mildew-free and very floriferous. Zone 5.

***Buddleja* ‘Blue Chip’.** Raised by Dr. Werner of the North Carolina State University and introduced by Spring Meadow Nurseries, Grand Haven, Michigan, U.S.A. The breeding aim was to obtain a more dwarf-growing and, preferably, sterile buddleia. The plant will not grow taller than 80–100 cm and more than 95% of the seeds are sterile. Further crosses from ‘Blue Chip’ have not so far proved possible. Zones 5–7.

***Celastris orbiculatus* ‘Autumn Revolution’.** Introduced by Baileys Nurseries Inc of Minnesota, U.S.A. An outstanding plant with large orange fruits in trusses. It could have a good future for flower arrangements. Zones 4–5.

***Clematis* ‘Zoin’.** Raised by Wim Snoeijer and brought into the trade by Jan van Zoest. This a clematis in the *diversifolia* group, closely related to *Clematis durandii*. They are very hardy and not self-clinging. This cultivar has so far proved resistant to clematis wilt. Another advantage is that the branches die off in the winter so the plant is easy to keep tidy. Zone 5.

***Clematis* ‘Zoblupi’.** Another cultivar from Wim Snoeijer. This blue flowering clematis of the *diversifolia* group also performs well as cut flower — there is a field of 10 acres on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. It produces about 4000 branches per week and over the last 12 months the average stem price was €0.65. The nice part is that all flowers in bud will come out nicely in the vase. Breeding continues and we hope to see other colours in a couple of years time. Zone 5.

***Cornus kousa* ‘Eva’, ‘Melanie’, and ‘Eline’.** Raised by A. Domen of De Douglas nurseries in Zundert who wondered why so few new cultivars were introduced by people growing transplants. He was told to keep his eyes open as there is always variation on the seed beds. These three new dogwoods look very promising and they have come through the winters in Poland very well. Zones 5–6.

***Cornus sanguinea* ‘Sifa’.** This plant was raised by André van Nijnatten and is not yet introduced. He previously raised *Cornus sanguinea* ‘Midwinter Fire’ and various other *sanguinea* types but these previous introductions do not perform well in a container so he looked for a healthier plant — and this new form certainly is. Zone 5.

***Crataegus succulenta* ‘Jubilee’.** Raised by Margareth Hopp of the nursery stock research station in Boskoop in a breeding programme for fireblight-resistant hawthorns. The plants have been tested for at least 10 years in a laboratory, where they were injected with the disease, but it never established an infection. Field trials have also been performed where the cultivar was planted close to plants suffering from fireblight. No signs of the disease have been seen in the trial plants for at least 15 years. It is a good grower with strong stems; very floriferous with nice berries. Zone 5.

***Diervilla sessilifolia* ‘LPDC Rodaras’, Cool Splash™ bush honeysuckle.** Introduced by Baileys Nurseries Inc. of Minnesota, U.S.A. *Diervilla* is a very tough plant and this variegated form — the first to my knowledge — is really great. It flowers well too. Zone 4.

***Hibiscus* ‘Resi’.** A tree form, resulting from a cross between *H. syriacus* ‘Woodbridge’ and *H. paramutabilis*. It bears very big pinkish-red flowers from July till the end of September. The field-grown plants have come through a week of temperatures down to -24 °C. A whip of 150–175 cm can be produced within a year. Zone 5.

***Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Abe Two’, Incrediball™ smooth hydrangea.** Huge flowers when established and sturdy branches. Zone 5.

***Hydrangea arborescens* 'Spirit', Invincibelle™ smooth hydrangea.** Raised by the North Carolina State University. The first, or one of the first, pink *H. arborescens*. Zone 5.

***Hydrangea paniculata* 'Bulk'.** Named Early Sensation™ in the E.U. and Quick-fire™ panicle hydrangea in the U.S.A. Raised by Rein Bulk from a cross between *H. paniculata* 'Dharuma' and 'Interhydia', Pink Diamond™ panicle hydrangea. The stems of 'Dharuma' are strong and it is a small shrub and both traits have been inherited by 'Bulk'. It flowers very early and the foliage colours burgundy red very early in the season too. Zone 4.

***Hypericum kalmianum* 'Deppe', Sunny Boulevard™ St. John's wort.** Raised by Tim Wood and introduced by Spring Meadow Nurseries, Grand Haven, Michigan, U.S.A. This *H. kalmianum* is very hardy, disease free, and free flowering. Zone 5.

***Lonicera henryi* 'Copper Beauty'.** This lovely evergreen has shiny dark green leaves and bears yellow flowers on the 1-year-old wood. Young foliage is bronze/copper colour. It is a useful plant for its attractive winter foliage. Raised by Arjan Laros, author of *Climbing Honeysuckles*. Zone 6.

***Lonicera periclymenum* 'Chojnov' (Fragrant Cloud).** Raised in Poland. A very hardy honeysuckle and long flowering in July-August. Zone 5.

***Mahonia* 'Bokrafoot', Blackfoot™ mahonia.** Raised by Kees-Jan Kraan and introduced by Boot & Co. Nurseries, Boskoop, the result of crosses between *Mahonia repens* and *M. aquifolium* 'Apollo'. Very nice compact habit and good for the amenity market with low maintenance. Zone 5.

***Mahonia* 'Cabaret'.** Raised by K.W. Verboom and probably a cross between *M. nitans* and *gracilipes*. Dwarf evergreen with lovely orange flowers in September and October. Zone 7.

***Parthenocissus quinquefolia* 'Troki'.** An outstanding vine found in Poland. Large dark green leaves and a spectacular red autumn colour. Zone 5.

***Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Chamaeleon'.** The first *Physocarpus* with three colours in its foliage. Zone 3.

***Potentilla fruticosa* 'Red Lady'.** In this author's view, the best red. It hold its colour very well in full sun; and 'White Lady', a nice silvery-leaved potentilla with white flowers. Very floriferous. Both Zones 3–4.

***Rhamnus cathartica* 'Fine Line'.** Raised and introduced by Spring Meadow Nurseries. A lovely upright *Rhamnus* and very hardy. Suitable as specimen plant but also as a deciduous hedge. Zone 3.

***Rhus typhina* 'Sinrus', Radiance™ staghorn sumac.** Introduced by Peter Catt of Liss Forest Nurseries, Hampshire, U.K. The young foliage is beautiful orange and the plant also has a very nice autumn colour. Zone 4.

***Thuja occidentalis*. 'Filips Magic Moment'.** Slow growing, performs well in Poland and doesn't scorch. Zone 4.

***Weigela florida* 'Verweig 3', Minor Black™ weigela.** A fantastic dwarf weigela raised by Bert Verhoef, the breeder of 'Verweig', Monet™ weigela. The bright

pink flowers are a lovely contrast with the purple leaves. Very floriferous and when pruned after flowering it will flower again in August and September. Zone 6

Berberis. In 2001 I was invited by a grower to go with him to visit Michael Andrusiv in the Czech Republic. I was told that Andrusiv had a number of seedlings of *Berberis thunbergii*. In those days *Berberis* was not very popular in Western Europe but I thought the existing range was old and people were simply getting bored with them. Andrusiv had been working to breed more hardy and interesting selections and from what we found he had succeeded. The climate in the Czech Republic is hot in the summer and very cold, down to -35 °C in the winter.

From hundreds of different seedlings we selected six cultivars. These have been growing well in trials in Europe and in the U.S.A. First sales will start this autumn. All are Zone 5.

'Admiration'. A cross between 'Goldalita' and f. *atropurpurea*. Mound shaped with bright orange young growth and yellow edge.

'Fire Ball'. A flatter-growing cultivar with orange young growth.

'Tiny Gold'. A very compact ball-shaped yellow form. Seems to be very tolerant to sunshine. Three new cultivars of this will be introduced soon.

'Golden Rocket'. Golden upright form.

'Orange Rocket'. Upright form with very orange young growth.

'Rosy Rocket'. An upright form of 'Rose Glow'.

'Orange Dream'. Nice spreading pendulous form with narrow, lancet-shaped, orange leaves.

'Golden Dream'. Same form as 'Orange Dream' but with golden foliage.

Berberis media 'Dual Jewel'. A sport of 'Parkjuweel'. Young growth yellow-green and the branch is orange-red. Quite useful for the amenity market. Zone 5–6.