'Red Prince' Weigela

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Weigela florida A. DC. 'Red Prince' is unique in presenting a bright, warm red flower that darkens with age rather than turning purplish, as do many red-flowered cultivars. 'Red Prince' blooms well on current season wood, permitting a second bloom period in late summer. 'Red Prince' is also more winter hardy than other red-flowered weigela cultivars (Higginbotham, 1986), having demonstrated hardiness as far north as zone 4a (U.S. Dept. Agr., 1990).

Origin

'Red Prince' was selected from seedlings of a cross made in 1968 between 'Vanicek', a widely available commercial cultivar, and an unnamed seedling, ISU41, which was selected from seeds obtained from I.W. Schumacher Co., Sandwich, Mass. 'Vanicek' is one of the hardiest of the available commercial cultivars. The parent plants are located at the Horticulture Station, Ames, Iowa. The goals of the weigela breeding program have been to develop cultivars with a good shrub habit, prolific flowering, and with good adaptation to the rigorous winters of the upper Midwest.

Description

A mature plant possesses 'a semi-upright habit and grows to 2 m tall, with a spread of 1.5 m. Young plants and mature plants grown in the shade may present a "weeping" habit (Fig. 1). 'Red Prince' has a more spreading habit than does 'Vanicek' under both sun and shade conditions.

Two or occasionally three simple leaves are borne opposite at a node. Leaves are elliptical, with an acuminate tip and an acute

base with a length : width ratio of $\approx 2:1$. The measurements under full summer sun range from 7.3 x 3.6 cm up to 14.7 x 7.0 cm, which represents a sample of fully expanded leaves. The largest leaves are typically found on the largest canes of the current season's growth. Summer flowering branches may have leaves much narrower than others (4:1 ratio). Leaf venation is pinnate and netted. The leaf margin is serrate, and may be slightly undulate. The upper (adaxial) surface of the leaves is dark green (RHSCC 137A) (Royal Horticultural Society, 1966), glabrous, and slightly rugose. The under (abaxial) surface of the leaves is iris green (RHSCC 147C) (Royal Horticultural Society, 1966) and somewhat scabrous.

The flowers generally are borne cymose, two per leaf axil on secondary branches that also terminate in flowers. Flowers are perfect, broadly funnelform, with petals fused at the base (gamopetalous), and unequally five-lobed. Mean flower length is 2.9 cm and mean flower diameter is 2.7 cm, two-thirds of which is the separated petal lobes.

The flower color is crimson (RHSCC between 47B and 47C) (Royal Horticultural Society, 1966), and it is superior to other red weigela, including 'Vanicek'.

'Red Prince' grows best in full sun but will do fairly well in partial shade. It has been rated superior in winter hardiness at the Univ. of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum (H. Pellett, personal communication, 1985), and consistently has shown better winter hardiness than 'Vanicek' in Ames.

'Red Prince' can be propagated by stem-tip cuttings in perlite under an intermittent mist system. Under our conditions, a basal application of 0.3% indolebutyric acid (IBA) in talc has hastened root initiation (J.W., unpublished data). Without IBA, callus may form rather than roots. 'Red Prince' is also easily micropropagated (L. S., unpublished data). Cultures can be initiated with a 10% bleach disinfection of nodal stem pieces for 20 min, followed by four rinses with sterile deionized water. The MS. revised medium (Murashige and Skoog, 1962) is supplemented with 5 mg N-(phenylmethyl)-H-purin-6-amine (BA)/liter in both initiation and multiplication phases. No other growth regulators are necessary. Shoots can be harvested directly from the multiplication medium and rooted under intermittent mist in a 1 sphagnum peat : 1 vermiculite soil mix that is pH-adjusted to 6.5, where rooting occurs within 2 weeks. Newly propagated plants will grow continuously, so long as they are grown under a 16-hr photoperiod.

Fig. 1. Flowering 'Red Prince' Weigela as grown in partial shade for 5 years on a site with northwest exposure.

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From 2 to 4 months are required until first flower, depending upon the season of the year.

Availability

'Red Prince' has been commercially available since 1984 and can be obtained from

many commercial nurserymen throughout the United States.

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