'Oakleaf' Tiarella

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Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia* L.) is typically grown as a hardy perennial herb. Foamflower is an excellent flowering groundcover in moist rich woodland and is native to the east coast of North America, from Nova Scotia to Georgia [U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) zones 3-9 (Bailey, 1976)].

Small white flowers in showy racemes up to 15 cm tall are displayed for ≈1 month from mid-April to May. Occasionally, pink flowering forms appear. Anther color varies from white to coral (Jacobs, 1991). Long, petioled, pubescent, broadly ovate leaves form attractive foliage clumps 15 to 25 cm wide. Foliage persists through the winter and abscises in the spring when new growth emerges. Unusual autumn and winter foliage color enhances the landscape value of tiarella. When protected from cold, foliage remains green.

Tiarella cordifolia and *T. cordifolia* var. *collina* Wherry (commonly referred to as *T. wherryi* Lakela) are both commercially available. The former is a stoloniferous type (stolons, produced from the original clump, generate nodal "daughter" clumps), and the latter is a clump-forming type occasionally with lobed leaves. The beauty and adaptability (Bailey, 1976) of these plants make them excellent subjects for reduced maintenance landscaping and gardens. To date, clonally identical tiarellas have not been available in large numbers. *Tiarella* also can be forced successfully as a potted plant in a greenhouse. Increased flowering time and foliar and flower color diversity are suitable breeding objectives.

Origin

Tiarella cordifolia var. *collina* 'Oakleaf' (Fig. 1) was developed through open pollination of cultivated *T. cordifolia* var. *collina* at the Brandywine Conservancy, Chadds Ford, Pa. (original plants donated by members). Seedlings with unusual leaf color (red and/or silver) and shape (nonbroadly ovate), and reduced leaf pubescence were selected for micropropagation studies (Kitto and Hoopes, 1992). We evaluated 'Oakleaf' at the Brandywine Conservancy in 1987 and 1988; it

was subsequently introduced by Dunvegan Nursery (a *Tiarella* spp. propagator and breeder) in 1990.

Description

'Oakleaf' is a strong-growing, clump-forming selection averaging 15 to 20 cm high. Flowers, produced in profusion, are white tinged with pink, which intensifies distally and varies with growing conditions. Inflorescences reach 16 to 21 cm in height and 2 to 3 cm in diameter. Anthers are coral. The 6- to 8-week flowering time is longer than *T. cordifolia* var. *collina* or *T. cordifolia* (S. Adam, personal observation). Leaves emerge red and pubescent and mature to a dark green with five distinct lobes. Foliage takes on a rich red-burgundy color with the onset of cool weather and the shorter days of autumn. 'Oakleaf' plants have survived 100% for two winters in

USDA zone 4 (16 plants, Univ. of Vermont; five plants, Univ. of Maine) and four winters in USDA zones 6 (32 plants; Dunvegan Nursery, West Chester, Pa.) and 7 (40 plants; Univ. of Delaware). 'Oakleaf' likely would survive throughout the species' hardiness range. Insects and diseases have not been a problem. 'Oakleaf' performs well in containers, and the long flowering time enhances this cultural aspect. Plants can be propagated by division and by tissue culture (Kitto and Hoopes, 1992).

Availability

Commercial availability of 'Oakleaf' ranges from Stage 11 tissue-cultured microcuttings to liners and fished plants. Source information may be obtained from S. Adam, Dunvegan Nursery, 1001 South New St., West Chester, PA 19382 or from S. King, SMK Plants, 5477 Gene Sarazen Dr., Billings, MN 59106.

Literature Cited

- Bailey, L.H. 1976. Hortus third. Macmillan, New York.
Jacobs, D. 1991. The puzzle of the eastern foamflowers. *Bul. Amer. Rock Garden Soc.* 49(1):44-51.
Kitto, S.L. and A. Hoopes. 1992. Micropropagation and field establishment of *Tiarella cordifolia*. *J. Environ. Hort.* 10:171-174.

Fig. 1. *Tiarella cordifolia* var. *collina* 'Oakleaf' flowering at Dunvegan Nursery on 13 May 1992.

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