'Ruby Mist' Coralbells

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Heuchera L. or coralbells (family Saxifragaceae) are grown by the landscape industry as flowering herbaceous perennials. The genus contains 35 to 50 species native to North America (Bailey and Bailey, 1976). A few species are grown commercially, but the majority of plants produced by the industry are hybrids developed from intra- or interspecific hybridizations. Cultivars have been developed from mainly three species: *H. americana* L., *H. sanguinea* Engelm., and *H. micrantha* Dougl. ex Lindl. Almost all of the cultivars and species tested at the Morden Research Station, Man., Canada, have not been winter hardy for Canadian Hardiness Zone 3b (Ouellet and Sherk, 1967). 'Ruby Mist' was identified in a breeding program designed to develop hardy coralbells.

Heuchera richardsonii R. (Scoggan, 1978), a species native to Manitoba that is well adapted to cold winters, was used as a hardiness source. The less hardy *H. sanguinea* was used for better floral qualities. Flowers in *H. sanguinea* are showy and often brightly colored. When these two species were hybridized, the F₁ hybrids were uniform.

Origin

Heuchera x 'Ruby Mist' (Fig. 1) was selected from a population as an open-pollinated seedling of selection 64-1. Selection 64-1 originated from an isolated open-pollinated population of 'Brandon Pink' (Fig. 2). 'Brandon Pink' was an F₁ hybrid of *H. richardsonii* x *H. sanguinea* (Marshall, 1983).

The original cross was completed by H.H. Marshall at the Agriculture Canada Research Station, Brandon, Man., followed by further crossing at the Research Centre, Morden, Man. (Marshall, 1983). Three hardy cultivars were introduced: 'Brandon Pink', 'Brandon Glow', and 'Northern Fire'. 'Ruby Mist' originated from the same germplasm as these three cultivars.

Description

Plants form small mounds and have basal leaves that are rounded-cordate or broadly 5-9 lobed or toothed with long petioles. Small flowers are borne in panicles on slender scapes overtopping the foliage. As the petals are

small or absent, the sepals provide the color of the bloom. Flowers are bell-shaped and occur in late spring to early summer. Flower colors available are white, cream, greenish, pink, chartreuse, red, and scarlet red.

'Ruby Mist' plants bloom more consistently and have shorter, stronger flower stalks than 'Northern Fire'. The mean vegetative plant height of 'Ruby Mist' is 22 ± 8 cm at Morden, depending on growing conditions. The height of the flower scapes is 58 ± 11 cm at Morden. Leaves are Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Green Group 137 A, B to Yellow Green Group 146 A-147 A (Royal Horticultural Society, 1966). Leaves are 8.5 ± 1.4 cm wide and 10.4 ± 2.1 cm long. Flower scapes range from Yellow Green Group 144 A, B below the inflorescence to Greyed Orange Group 174 A; 176 A, B; 177 A; 178 A within the inflorescence. Overall flower color is red with intensity varying slightly between flowers (RHS Red Group 46 A, B, C; 52 B; 53 B, C, D).

Plants have overwintered for 10 years at Morden (Zone 3b) (Ouellet and Sherk, 1967). During this time, minima of -35C have been recorded with minimal snow cover. As with other coralbells, 'Ruby Mist' easily can be propagated by division, stem, or leaf-bud cuttings, or tissue culture.

Availability

'Ruby Mist' is registered with the international authority for herbaceous perennials and the Canadian Ornamental Plant Foundation (COPF), 652 Aberdeen Ave., North Bay, Ont. P1B 7H9, Canada. Limited amounts of propagating stock are available until 1996 to members of COPF upon request to L.M.C. Agriculture Canada will collect royalties from this cultivar.

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Fig. 1. 'Ruby Mist' coralbells (*Heuchera* L.).

Heuchera richardsonii x *Heuchera sanguinea*

Fig. 2. Pedigree of 'Ruby Mist' coralbells.

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