

**APPRECIATION OF CONTRIBUTION TO BRITISH
GARDENING BY HOPLEYS NURSERY & THEIR STAFF
AND THE RECENT AWARD OF THE AGM
FOR**

Abelia x grandiflora ‘Hopleys’
By Christopher Sanders

Over the years, many good new plants have been introduced by Hopleys Nursery of Much Hadham in Hertfordshire England. Top of the list is probably *Potentilla* RED ACE (‘Bloace’), discovered by David Barker, father of present MD Aubrey Barker. One of the first hardy woody ornamentals to receive Plant Breeders Rights in the UK, this was still earning royalties right up to the end of its protection, when it was finally joined by *P. MARIAN* RED ROBIN (‘Marrob’), both continue to be available. Other notable introductions have been *Diascia barberae* ‘Hopleys Apricot’, now superseded by *Diascia Personata* ‘Hopleys’, *Lavatera x clementii* ‘Barnsley’, *Osteospermum* ‘Hopleys’, *Pyracantha coccinea* ‘Sparkler’, *Sphaeralcea* ‘NewLeaze Coral’, *Origanum Laevigatum* ‘Hopleys’ and *Verbascum* ‘Helen Johnson’, to say nothing of some fifty cultivars of Double Primrose.

One of the most recent newcomers is *Abelia x grandiflora* ‘Hopleys’. It was originally found at Hopleys by Pamela Martin, one of the Hopley’s team, and fully endorsed by Aubrey Barker in 1994 as a sport on the yellow-variegated *A. x grandiflora* ‘Francis Mason’. ‘Hopleys’ yellow-margined leaves at first, becoming creamy-white later in the season. The lilac-tinged, white flowers open from darker buds and are borne in profusion from mid-summer to the onset of frosts. In a trial of *Abelia* species and cultivars carried out at the Royal Horticultural Society’s (RHS) garden at Wisley in Surrey from 2007-2010, ‘Hopleys’ out-performed all other entries with variegated foliage. It was the only one where all three plants tested survived all four winters without serious damage. It should be noted that the trial site was situated in a frost pocket where temperatures down to -14°C were recorded. In addition, very little reversion was observed compared with some of the other variegated entries. At the end of the trial, *Abelia x grandiflora* ‘Hopleys’ received a well-deserved Award of Garden Merit (AGM) from the RHS.

The RHS AGM is only awarded to plants that are deemed by panels of experienced judges to be of outstanding excellence for the ordinary garden. In order to qualify, such plants must be:

- a) available in the trade
- b) of good constitution

- c) not requiring any special skills/conditions to grow well
- d) not be particularly subject to any pest or disease
- e) stable and not subject to undue levels of reversion, especially in the case of variegated plants

AGM's may be awarded in the following ways:

- a) after trial, usually at Wisley, although occasionally elsewhere.
- b) after inspection of specialist collections, usually over several years
- c) in committee after due consideration by the relevant assessment panel

All AGM's are reviewed every 10 years, when any plants that are considered by the panels to have been superseded since the last review are withdrawn.

The AGM system is intended to be used as a guide to both amateur and professional growers for choosing good, reliable plants from the sometimes-bewildering range on the market today. It does not pretend to cover all plants and it certainly does not mean that any plant without an AGM is not necessarily garden worthy. Nevertheless, it is seen and used by both enlightened growers and their customers as a most useful way of helping to decide what to grow in today's gardens and landscapes.

Article courtesy of Christopher Sanders, Chairman of the RHS Woody Trials Panel

Information from Genesis

Abelia 'Hopleys' is now an international variety and is available as young plants, or finished plants in Belgium, France, Holland, Italy, and Japan. In 2012, it will commence its first release in South Africa and will be given its true name in the USA where it is on the market under a local USA Nursery Trade Mark.

After the announcement of the award of the AGM three new UK clients will be stocking 'Hopleys' from 2012 onwards.

