



Helping
Carolinians
Increase Their
Knowledge of
Gardening,
Manage Their
Landscape
Investment &
Protect the
Environment

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

Rockspray Cotoneaster Accents Walls, Covers Slopes

Rockspray cotoneaster, *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, is a lovely plant to consider when you are looking for a plant to cover a bank or drape over a wall. The stem grows in an interesting fishbone or herringbone pattern which creates a flat growth and layered effect that makes it an excellent choice. The plant is also a good selection for rock gardens or to espalier.

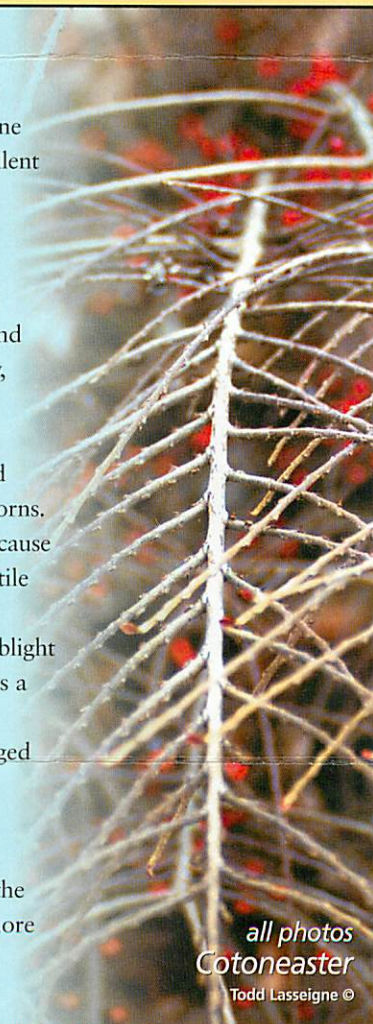
This versatile plant brightens fall and winter with its red berries that decorate the stiff, spreading branches. It is generally thought of as semi-evergreen though it sometimes is considered evergreen or deciduous. The plant grows to a height of about 2 to 3 feet with a spread of 5 to 8 feet and has a small, fine-textured green leaf that turns purplish red in fall. In May, it has small, 1/4" diameter, whitish pink blooms.

Cotoneaster horizontalis, widely used in England, is worthy of more frequent consideration in our landscapes, particularly for its hardiness and nice features throughout the year. It is related to apples, pears and hawthorns. This cotoneaster grows in zones 6, 7 and 8, and tolerates coastal areas. Because of its sparse root system, plant container-grown plants in well-drained fertile soil in either full sun or partial shade. The plant is a slow grower.

Some of the possible insect problems are lacebugs, mites and scale. Fireblight can be a disease problem. If you have a deer problem, though, this plant is a good one to consider as it is not a deer favorite.

A variety to look for is 'Variegatus', named for its variegated leaves edged in white which turn rose red in fall. Other varieties include 'Ascendens', 'Dart's Splendid', 'Robustus' and 'Wilsonii'.

The multiseason landscape value of the cotoneaster sets it apart from many other plant choices. Visit the JC Raulston Arboretum for a look at the rockspray cotoneaster as well as other species worth discovering. Learn more at www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum. **Emily Revels**



all photos
Cotoneaster
Todd Lasseigne ©

inside

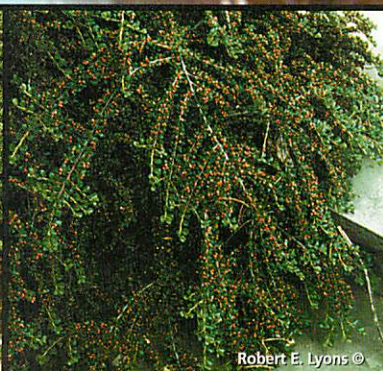
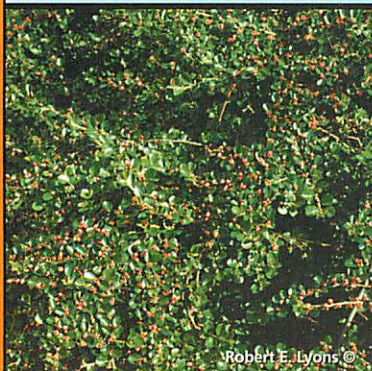
2 2003 All-America Selections

3 Enviro-Tip

4 Garden Spot

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- Southern Extension Forest Resource Specialists
- N.C. Association of County Agricultural Agents
- Mecklenburg County Priority Awards
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All-America Selections ©
'Prairie Sun'



All-America Selections ©
'Blue Wave'



All-America Selections ©
'Sundance Bicolor'



All-America Selections ©
'Papaya Pear'

Pick These Winning 2003 All-America Selections

The 2003 All-America Selections take the guesswork out of finding reliable new flower and vegetable varieties. Plants designated AAS Winners have proven to be superior to others in traits such as drought and heat tolerance, color retention, length of bloom period or disease and insect resistance.

2003 Bedding and Flowering Plant Winners

- 'Can Can Scarlet', a heat tolerant carnation, produces flowers throughout the growing season into the fall. The spicy fragrance of this selection will fill a room when the double, 2-inch blooms are cut and used in a bouquet. Mature plants will reach 12 to 14 inches tall.
- 'Purple Majesty', a F1 hybrid ornamental millet, is a Gold Medal Flower Award Winner. The purple leaf blades and distinct flower spike distinguish this annual grass from all other ornamentals. Capable of growing 3 to 5 feet tall, the green leaves of young plants turn a dark purple with exposure to direct sunlight, and the plants are embellished with striking 8- to 12-inch flower spikes.
- A distinctly different blue and white petunia, 'Merlin Blue Morn' exhibits 2 1/2-inch blooms with a pure white center and a soft transition to velvety blue at the petal edge. The bicolor flower pattern makes this prolifically branching plant highly visible from a distance. With a mature spread of 18 to 30 inches and height of 15 to 20 inches, 'Merlin Blue Morn' works wonderfully in hanging baskets or patio containers.

- *Rudbeckia hirta* 'Prairie Sun' displays distinctive blooms of a light green central cone blending beautifully with golden-yellow petals, tipped in primrose yellow. The robust 5-inch blooms on branching plants that mature at about 3 feet tall make a strong statement in any full-sun garden.
- The velvety, dark blue 2-inch blooms of petunia 'Blue Wave' cover this trailing plant the entire growing season. Capable of spreading 3 to 4 feet, with a mature plant height of 4 to 7 inches, 'Blue Wave' is adaptable to any container. The 'Wave' improvement means little garden toil. No pinching or pruning is needed for 'Blue Wave' to flower all season.
- *Agastache foeniculum* 'Golden Jubilee' is a lovely golden-leaved aromatic herb that thrives in a full or partial sun location. Named 'Golden Jubilee' to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, the symmetrical, branching plants reach a mature height of 20 inches and spread 10 to 15 inches. This easily grown, undemanding, heat-loving annual produces

dense spikes of lavender-blue florets that crown the plants in mid to late summer.

- With a capricious bicolor flower pattern that can be entirely cherry red, entirely lavender or a mosaic of both, *Dianthus* 'Corona Cherry Magic' provides a whimsical alternative as a bedding plant. When planted in a full-sun location, one can expect large, 2-inch blooms that provide season-long color on plants that reach 7 to 9 inches tall with an 8- to 10-inch spread.
- If an extremely heat and drought tolerant bedding plant that provides constant garden color and is not attractive to deer appeals to you, then look for *Vinca* 'Jaio Dark Red'. A really red vinca with a small white center sets this summer flowering vinca apart from all others. The large 2 1/2-inch blooms can cover the basally branched plant throughout the growing season. When grown in a full-sun location, 'Jaio Dark Red' plants can attain a mature plant height of 15 inches, spreading up to 20 inches.
- Another heat and drought tolerant plant to look for is *Eustoma* 'Forever White'. Its compact, branching habit works well in container culture. The large 2 1/2-inch, ivory-white blooms cover the plant at various times throughout the growing season. Attaining a mature height of 12 inches, 'Forever White' plants fit perfectly into patio containers where the blooms can be appreciated with close contact.
- The first consistent mahogany red and yellow bicolor gaillardia flower can be found on 'Sundance Bicolor'. The globe-shaped blooms are primarily double and can cover the plant throughout the growing season. Exhibiting heat and drought tolerance, 'Sundance Bicolor' is a carefree addition to the garden. The spreading plants need 15 to 16 inches of garden space, preferably in full sun.

2003 Vegetable Award Winners

- The first summer squash with shape similar to a tropical papaya, the bright yellow 'Papaya Pear' looks like a light bulb with the widest section near the blossom end. One of the earliest summer squash varieties, 'Papaya Pear' fruit can be harvested in about 40 days from sowing seed. The semi-bush plant works well in small garden spaces.
- Melon F1 'Angel' is an early Mediterranean-melon with a very sweet flavor. The 2- to 3-pound melons have a white flesh with a crisp texture. The lightly netted skin turns creamy yellow when mature, about 60 days from planting young 'Angel' plants in the garden.

Royce Hardin

Gardentalk

"Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle . . . a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl."

— Barbara Winkler

Q&A

What are fungus gnats, will they kill my plant and how can I get rid of them?

Fungus gnats are common houseplant pests. They are tiny, grayish black gnats about 1/8-inch long. The fungus gnat maggot has a shiny black head and a white body. A mature larva is about 1/4-inch long. The fungus gnat adults are usually seen before injury from the maggots is noticed. The damage is first noticeable when the plants lose their healthy appearance and wilt. The adult fungus gnat lives about one week. During this time the female will lay 100 to 150 eggs. The larvae feed on the root hairs and roots in the upper centimeter of the soil layer, working their way up the plant and into the stem. They also feed on organic

matter in the soil. The larvae will pupate into adult fungus gnats in 17 days. The adult fungus gnats are weak fliers but they run rapidly on the soil surface. The adults do not harm the plant but can be a nuisance. Fungus gnat problems can be avoided by not overwatering plants. Allowing the plants to dry out between waterings will also decrease the fungus gnat population. Since fungus gnats prefer potting mixes containing peat moss and abundant moisture, consider using bark mixes. If you have a severe problem with fungus gnats, use a pyrethrin insecticide labeled for houseplants and home use.

Amy Lynn Bartel

Equipment Care

After the bulbs are planted and the last leaves are gathered, garden tools and implements will likely be put to rest for the winter. Hand tools and power equipment perform better and last longer with proper care and storage.

Clean hoes, rakes and shovels; wash off soil and sharpen if necessary.

Take a close look at the fertilizer and lime spreader. Fertilizer residues corrode metal gears and other metal parts reducing the life of the spreader. Apply a thin coat of lightweight oil to metal surfaces to protect tools from unnecessary corrosion.

Pruners and loppers may need blade replacements or new springs. Replace them now.

Make a habit of replacing the oil, cleaning foam air filters and replacing damaged or paper filters in tillers and lawn mowers. Inspect the spark plug and replace if needed. If possible, drain the gas if the engine will be idle during the winter months. Overwintering gas loses its octane and may cause carburetion problems later. Add special additives to overwintering gas to help prevent octane and gumming problems. Remove grass clippings from underneath the mower and spray the underneath with oil to prevent rust.

Sharpen the blade now or replace with a new mulching blade to reduce excess clippings and add organic matter back to the lawn. *Darrell Blackwelder*

ENVIRO-TIP

Groundwater Misconceptions

Groundwater should be monitored, protected and used wisely. Start by being aware of what's myth and what's not when it comes to groundwater.

Myth: Wells tap underground streams and rivers.

Reality: In the Piedmont and mountains of North Carolina, well water comes from saturated soil above the bedrock. Water from this saturated soil flows through cracks in the bedrock to the well. These cracks are typically a few millimeters wide and originate within a few hundred feet of the well.

Myth: You can't tell how much well water is available.

Reality: To determine the amount of saturated soil, subtract the static water level from the depth of bedrock. The depth of bedrock equals the depth of casing on a properly installed well. This information is found on a tag on the well. The static water level varies but can be measured directly. This number will give you a relative amount of how much water is available.

Myth: Heavy irrigation affects groundwater over the entire county.

Reality: Neighboring wells on the same side of a major creek tap into the same water. They can cause your well to go dry. Neighbors across the creek don't affect your groundwater.

Myth: Dowsers tap into magical power.

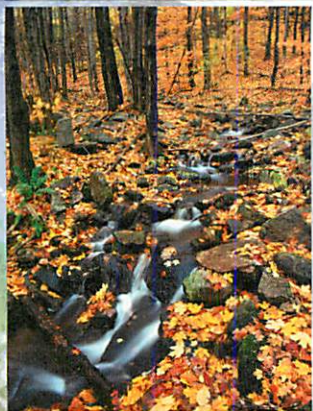
Reality: Videotapes show the dowsers themselves move the sticks. Good dowsers can find the best place for a well, just as well as trained individuals. Poor dowsers will still find water, although the gallons per minute will be lower. Seldom is more than one well drilled to test them.

Myth: Well water is always safe.

Reality: Well water can be contaminated several ways. Usually this occurs within 500 feet of the well and is often preventable.

Contact your local Cooperative Extension Center for information on protecting wells or visit www.soil.ncsu.edu/assist/homeassist/water/.

David Goforth





Gardening in January & February

Lawn Care

- Fertilize cool-season lawns in February. Follow soil test recommendations. In absence of a soil test, add 1 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet of lawn area.
- Access NC State University recommendations for turf at <http://www.turffiles.ncsu.edu/index.php>. This Web site includes many tips, news, upcoming events and publications.
- Control winter weeds such as wild garlic and chickweed with a broadleaf herbicide. Spray on a warm day. Results are slow in winter.

Edibles

- Time to start planting those cool-season vegetables. Your county Cooperative Extension Center has a list of vegetables and the dates to plant in your region.
 - Apply dormant oil on fruit trees to kill insect eggs before leaf and flower buds begin to expand.
 - Prune trees as soon as the flower buds swell and show some color.
 - Purchase quality seed from reputable seed catalogs or garden centers.

Ornamentals

- In late February, prune plants that bloom on current season's growth, such as butterfly bush.
 - Trim ornamental grasses such as liriope, mondo and pampas.
 - Plant trees and shrubs now so the roots can get established before hot, dry weather.
 - Cut back those overgrown evergreen shrubs now. Any type of severe pruning should be done in February.
- February is a good month to plant bare root material such as roses.
- Start dividing perennials such as daylily and shasta daisy in February and continue through March, according to your microclimate.

Craig Mauney

Spring garden

shows add to the list of the many beautiful gardens to visit throughout North Carolina. Like Camelot, they exist for a fleeting moment. But while in existence, they can provide inspiration and ideas at the end of a long winter. Depending on the show, you may be able to view display gardens, purchase various plants and supplies, and hear experts speak on a variety of subjects. Successful Gardener seminars will be presented at several of these shows. Here's a sampling of the shows coming up in 2003:

- Feb. 1-2: How Does Your Garden Grow?, Wilmington
- Feb. 21-23: Triad Home and Garden Show, Winston-Salem
- Feb. 22-Mar. 2: Southern Spring Show, Charlotte
- Mar. 7-9: Carolina Spring Show, Hickory
- Mar. 28-30: Southern Ideal Home Show, Greensboro
- Apr. 26-27: Currituck Flower and Garden Show, Currituck High School
- Apr. 26-27: Growin' in the Mountains, Fletcher.

Kevin Starr

Garden Spot



Tune in to "Making It Grow!" – a gardening show featuring Extension agents from the Carolinas. Saturdays, Noon, WTVI 42, Charlotte

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