‘Firepower’ Nandina (Nandina domestica): A Noninvasive Nandina for Florida

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Description

‘Firepower’ nandina is a noninvasive selection of the invasive ornamental, Nandina domestica, as determined by the UF/IFAS Infraspecific Taxon Protocol, a tool to evaluate invasiveness of cultivars and varieties. ‘Firepower’ nandina is a low-growing, broadleaf evergreen shrub characterized by upright, cane-like stems that emerge from a crown-like structure at the soil surface (Figures 1 and 2). Pinnately compound leaves with broad leaflets are clustered at terminals. Growth is dense and compact, resulting in the overall effect of a mounded plant form.

UF/IFAS research in north and south Florida showed that ‘Firepower’ nandina does not flower or fruit (Knox and Wilson, 2006). In addition, it differs from the species type (“resident species”) of Nandina domestica in being distinctly compact, significantly shorter and in having broader leaflets that typically are lighter green in summer and more red in winter. While not considered rhizomatous, the “crown” of ‘Firepower’ nandina can increase in diameter with time.
Ornamental Characteristics

New growth of ‘Firepower’ nandina is lime green aging to light or medium green (Figure 1). Foliage may be tinged yellow or red, especially in summer (Figure 2). Low temperatures in fall and winter result in outer leaves of ‘Firepower’ nandina turning burgundy to brilliant red (Figures 3–5). This coloration often persists until new growth flushes in spring.

‘Firepower’ nandina grows to be 24–60-inches-tall and is considered a medium-size cultivar. Often it is marketed as “dwarf” because it is distinctly shorter than the standard species type and is slower growing. Annual plant growth of ‘Firepower’ nandina is 4–6 inches. Typical mature specimens of ‘Firepower’ nandina are 24-inches-tall and wide. Specimens aged 17 years at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum (Raleigh, NC) were just 36-inches-tall and 50-inches-wide.

Uses

‘Firepower’ nandina is widely planted in masses as a shrubby groundcover. In addition, it may be used as an accent plant or in borders and foundation plantings (Figure 4). Its primary ornamental features are the finely textured foliage, compact form, colorful new growth and red foliage in winter. ‘Firepower’ nandina is commonly used in north Florida, less used in central Florida and rarely used in south Florida landscapes.

Culture

‘Firepower’ nandina grows best in moist, fertile soil under light shade. It tends not to persist in full sun or dry soils unless it is mulched and irrigated regularly. ‘Firepower’ nandina is otherwise tolerant of most soil types. Furthermore, it is considered pest free and does not require pruning. As with the standard species type, ‘Firepower’ nandina is hardy within USDA Hardiness Zones 6–10. ‘Firepower’ nandina is propagated asexually via division, cuttings or tissue culture.

History

Sometimes listed as ‘Fire Power’, ‘Firepower’ nandina was allegedly derived in New Zealand as a sport from the cultivar, ‘Nana Purpurea’, also known as ‘Atropurpurea Nana’. ‘Firepower’ differs from ‘Nana Purpurea’ in having broader leaflets that are not contorted, presumably because...
‘Firepower’ nandina is virus free. ‘Firepower’ nandina was introduced into the United States sometime before 1985.

References


