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A NEW CULTIVAR: ARCTOSTAPHYLOS x 'SUNSET'

Among the 55 or so different species of Manzanita native to California, there have been only a relatively few horticultural selections made. Most of the selected forms of Manzanitas available in nurseries today were introduced by the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation over the past 25 years. These outstanding garden forms have proved particularly adaptable and suitable for low-maintenance landscaping in California--a critical choice in these times of diminishing resources.

The Saratoga Horticultural Foundation is proud to announce a new addition to its growing list of improved cultivars from this highly ornamental and useful genus: Arctostaphylos x 'Sunset'.

The cultivar name 'Sunset' was chosen to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Sunset Magazine and the wealth of timely advice and information the Lane Publishing Company has made available to the western gardening public.

The parent plant of 'Sunset' was discovered in 1965 by Roman Gankin and W. Richard Hildreth in chaparral near Prunedale in northern Monterey County, while on a collecting expedition for the Arboretum, University of California, Davis. A few cuttings were removed, rooted, and ultimately planted in the Arboretum. Subsequently, stock of 'Sunset' was brought to the Foundation by the Director in 1971, and it has been under observation since.

The original plant of 'Sunset' was noted in the wild because it exhibited characters intermediate to those of two of the species of Arctostaphylos growing in this Prunedale population: A. pajaroensis (Pajaro Manzanita) and A. hookeri (Hooker Manzanita).

Many specimens of A. hookeri over nine feet tall were noted here. Quite obviously, 'Sunset' is a hybrid of these two species, and shows the shreddy bark typical of Pajaro Manzanita and the glossy, pointed, mature leaves and tomentose branchlets typical of Hookeri Manzanita, as well as other intermediate characters.

The parent plant of 'Sunset' is an evergreen shrub 4-5 feet tall, with a 4-6 feet spread. Progeny from this plant have grown 5 feet tall by 5 feet wide in nine years in Davis, although the growth rate of plantings at the Foundation has been considerably faster. The branching habit of young plants is rather open, while mature specimens may be much denser. It seems to tolerate garden situations, as well as nursery production conditions. New growth in the spring and flushes of growth later in the season are a rich coppery red, gradually turning to glossy green. The leaves of 'Sunset' tend to be larger, somewhat wavy, and more widely spaced on the branches than those of other Arctostaphylos hookeri forms currently in the trade. The flowers are white with a blush of pink, with a reasonably abundant bloom during March and April.

Plantings of Arctostaphylos x 'Sunset' may be seen at the Arboretum, University of California, Davis; Sunset Magazine, Menlo Park; and the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation.

W. Richard Hildreth
August 6, 1975