



SARATOGA HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

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Eriogonum latifolium ssp grande var rubescens

Hiding behind this extraordinarily long (but necessary) designation is the Red (sometimes called Rosy) Buckwheat, a native of Santa Cruz Island, where it occurs in dry rocky situations as part of the coastal sage scrub community.

It is a highly desirable and decorative, low growing, mounding sub-shrub with grey leaves and pink to red flowers. It is yet another member of this useful genus of Buckweats, which has proved to be such an important component of the available spectrum of reliable, native, drought-tolerant plants and which should be standard items in that catalogue of plant material used by gardeners and landscapers, who are designing and planning for low water usage situations - such as rockeries, 'native' gardens and quasi-natural plantings.

The Red Buckwheat will eventually develop into a low and compact but spreading shrub, which may mound to two feet tall, but is in practice more likely to produce a flatter growing bush and develop to a height of only twelve to eighteen inches. After a period of two to three years it may ultimately spread to about four feet.

The stem structure consists of a relatively sparsely branched caudex on which the old leaves persist; the stem internodes are extremely short and the leaf bases tend to enfold one another thus producing a very dense arrangement. In the early part of the year new shoots are produced in the leaf axils and it is these which give rise to the new season's flowers.

The leaves are up to three inches long and one inch wide. Each is made up of an ovate leaf blade which has undulate margins and a cordate base, together with a long petiole which may exceed half of the total length of the leaf. They are grey-green on the upper surface and heavily, white-felted on the under surfaces of both leaf blade and leaf stalk. In an ideal growing situation, i.e. in a dry, exposed and sunny position, the upper side of the leaves become distinctly grey; so producing a significantly silver cast to the overall impression of the shrub.

The flowers are produced on much branched terminal cymes which stand one to two feet erectly above the vegetative structure of the plant. The dense, compact clusters each contain many flowers in which the calyx is nominally pink

- however considerable variation can be found in this feature, at least in those plants in cultivation, and it is possible to select individuals from seedling populations which exhibit flower colours of deep pink, dark rose and shades of red. A certain amount of selection of parental lines can quickly produce batches of one predominant colour. The plants offered by SHF have been selected to produce a good red.

The flowers are produced over a long season from April right through into the autumn, flower production is prolific in a sunny situation and it is reported that dead heading the shrub once a month will maintain a continued and prolific flower production throughout the season. The matured flowers and seed heads also develop a good rust colour and are decorative in their own right.

Although this is a drought tolerant plant it will be necessary to provide sufficient summer irrigation during the first season, to provide for establishment from the nursery container into the landscape situation. If this plant is to be part of an irrigated landscape it would be prudent to avoid overhead watering, as scorch and its related problems could always be a potential hazard; however it is likely to be more tolerant of this condition than the Saffron Buckwheat, although it will inevitably appear greener in leaf colour as a consequence.

In common with virtually all the cultivated Buckweats, this species is not tolerant of poor drainage conditions. The chief cultural problem for this plant consequently will be the root rots produced by water mould fungi in damp and soggy soil conditions. Insect problems do not usually occur with this plant.

Hardiness is likely to be a problem for any plant from an island provenance but the Red Buckwheat will nevertheless tolerate temperatures down to 20°F and would probably be able to survive to 15°F in a dry situation.

Sub-shrub; evergreen; grey foliage; flowering; low water usage.