



A Wholesale Nursery

- [Home Page](#)
- [About Spring Meadow](#)
- [Contact Information](#)
- [Catalog Request](#)
- [Ordering](#)
- [Availability](#)
- [Newsletter](#)
- [Plants A-Z](#)
- [Proven Winners](#)
- [New Plants](#)
- [Order Custom P.O.P](#)
- [Plant Articles](#)
- [Photographs](#)
- [The Plant Hunter Blog](#)
- [Join Our Team](#)
- [Links](#)

The best nursery links on the web are found here!

[PW Liners](#)

[Hydrangea Liners](#)

[Subscribe to the Plant](#)

Butterfly Bush

Fragrant, Colorful, Fun

By **Tim Wood** All rights reserved © Spring Meadow Nursery, Inc.



Few plants are as colorful, fun or as profitable as Butterfly Bush, *Buddleia davidii*. It is a joy to literally watch this plant grow inches per week and then grace us with a wonderful display of blooms from midsummer until frost. As if the large, colorful flower panicles were not enough in themselves, they have the added bonus of having a delightful, sweet aroma with the propensity to attract an equally attractive array of colorful butterflies. Who can resist the fun and beauty of *Buddleia*?

Native to Western China, and root hardy to zone 5, *Buddleia* is considered a dieback shrub in Michigan and other northern climates. Simply put, this means that although it produces woody stems, it behaves like a perennial and dies back close to the ground. And just like a perennial, it makes no difference to the

Hunter blog via Email

I'm a . . .

- I'm a Grower
- I'm a Retailer
- I'm a Gardener
- I'm a Garden Writer
- I'm a Plant Breeder

We represent plant breeders in North America, Europe and Asia. Learn more about plant patents, plant breeders Rights and Canadian Breeders Rights.

plant. Simply cut back the dead stems in early spring, stand back and watch the plant explode with growth. Buddleia blooms on new wood, so its floral display is not diminished by its dieback behavior. In fact cutting Buddleia back benefits the blooming and overall plant habit. Even in the south where its wood remains alive, an annual spring whacking makes for a nicer plant.

Buddleia typically grows to a height of 5 to 6 feet. In milder climates, it can grow twice as tall if not cut back. its texture can be ratty and course depending upon the culture and the cultivar. I find that a bushier, fuller and more floriferous plant is produced if the branch tips are pinched two or three times in the spring or early summer. Culturally, Buddleia is not demanding. It only requires full sun and decent drainage. Water is essential when establishing the plants, but once rooted in it is remarkable drought tolerant. It is a easy production plant, especially in containers. A 4" potted liner can finish a two or three gallon in one growing season without much difficulty. Several light sheerings accomplish the same bushy plant as pinching. Over wintering is the key to production success. Plants should be well established by fall and over wintered pot to pot in a polyhouse. A layer of micro foam over the dormant plants is added insurance but is not usually necessary. It is important that the containers to not remain overly wet in the winter or early spring before the growth begins. Excessive moisture can lead to

root rot.

Choosing which varieties to grow can be more difficult than producing the plants. There are numerous cultivars, and many appear to be the same plant only sold under several different names. Over the last several years we have made an attempt to evaluate all available cultivars to determine what are the best plants and sort out any miss naming. To date we have acquired 57 selections and have learned much about this beautiful group of plants. Most growers and retailers prefer to stock a range of colors. Although you certainly don't need 57 varieties, don't settle on too few. Last year when Midwest Living did an article on Butterfly Bush, and mentioned that Spring Meadow had one of the largest selections available, we had an unbelievable response. We had numerous phone calls, as well as, people driving up from Indiana and Chicago trying to buy plants. Garden centers that only offer three or four of the most common varieties do not satisfy the demand for diversity. Here are my favorites.

The Best of the Best

Dwarf Plants

Dwarf and compact Buddleia are the wave of the future. While older cultivars were selected for flower color they are notorious for having rangy habits. New and improved selections are delivering the color but on neater, better branching plants. Dwarf cultivars are relatively new. The Nanho series is



often
called
dwarf
but the
only
thing
dwarf
on



these plants is the flower.

The best dwarf plants come from a new series called "The English Butterfly Series." This new group of plants was developed by Elizabeth Keep from England. Her plants are about 1/2 the size of a typical butterfly bush and very dense but with large flowers. The cultivar Peacock is a very nice lavender pink that shines in the garden. Purple Emperor is a dark purple and Adonis Blue (shown to the right) is a rich dark blue. Growers are pleased with these selections because they present well in containers and make a good presentation at retail.

Lo & Behold - a New Series of Miniature Butterfly bush

Undoubtedly, the most exciting news in Butterfly bush has to be the introduction of a new series of Miniature plants called Lo & Behold. The first release is Lo & Behold 'Blue Chip' (see above) and as the name indicates it has blue flowers. Other colors will be introduced over the following years. Lo & Behold plants are remarkable for several reasons. Their small 20" mounded habit make for the perfect flowering ground cover or container plants. Unlike other Butterfly bush, this series is

continuous flowering. That's right continuous flowering without the need to prune or deadhead.

Purple

Although 'Black Knight' is the most popular dark purple, I have little fondness for the plant. its blooms are small and its habit is ratty. I much prefer the cultivar 'Potter's Purple'. Although it is not quite as dark, the shade of purple is more attractive and eye catching. Potter's Purple has big, fat blooms, and its branching is stronger and more refined. The best thing about 'Black Knight' is its name, and for that reason I grow both of these purple varieties

Nanho Purple' is worth growing as are the other selections of *Buddleia davidii* var. *nanhoensis*. Often sold as a dwarf, this is not quite truthful. Yes, the variety is smaller than the straight species but still reaches 6 to 8 feet tall. What make the Nanhos unique, and appear dwarf, is that it has smaller leaves, slender compact branches, and small but numerous blooms. The overall effect is more refined than the species in general.

Pink

There are several very good pink

selections that range from dark to light. The best light pink cultivar has to be 'Pink Delight'. The large bloom color is a pure rich pink. Much richer than that of 'Fascinating' (aka 'Pink Facination'). When it comes to form, foliage and texture, 'Pink Delight' is the standard by which to measure all Buddleia. It has wonderful, thick pubescent silver leaves. This pubescence also provides excellent spider mite resistance! The plant is relatively compact with excellent branching. And in the most graceful manner, it holds its long panicles upright in a neat and attractive manner. It's a delight!

A few years back Carroll Gardens introduced a new variety called 'Raspberry Wine'. A selection sold as 'Summer Rose' appears to be the same plant only with a different name. 'Raspberry Wine' has a neat well branched habit and silvery leaves. The flowers are good sized and neatly displayed. I love the color of its rich dark velvety pink blooms. When in bloom this plant is hard to resist.

One other pink worth noting is 'Dartmoor'. This plant has blooms unlike any other Buddleia. Instead of narrow panicles, 'Dartmoor' has big, fat multi-branched blooms that hang downward. The flower color is a pleasing lavender-pink. It is quite nice.

White

White flowering Buddleia will never out sell purple, but they should still be offered in the appropriate number. There is a new white flowering Buddleia that is

certainly distinct and is going to find a large following. The selection is called 'White Ball'. I first saw this plant in Belgium, and later found that it was being



offered by Wayside gardens. This unique plant grows in the shape of a tight ball. The

branching is a tight rounded habit that is very attractive. It has very beautiful, bright silver foliage that makes the plant a winner even when it is not in bloom. The white blooms are medium sized and well distributed over the whole plant.

Purple-Red The name 'Royal Red' is a bit misleading because its blooms are not a true red, but this is as close as you can get to red. 'Royal Red's blooms are rich magenta, of good size and are held up nicely. It is a beautiful plant on all accounts. It appears that this plant is being sold under numerous names. After comparing the plants in our trials, as well as, the plants in Mike Dirr's Buddleia trials, I would venture to say that 'African Queen', 'Burgundy', 'Red Plume', and 'Wine' are all actually 'Royal Red'. There is

a variegated selection of 'Royal Red' called 'Harlequin'. It is not the most beautiful variegated form, it tends to revert, and the growth can be weak and ratty, however, people are nuts for variegation and it does sell well.

Blue

For the longest time, I was always disappointed with the blue Buddleias. Most tended to be a lavender-blue. We are growing two selections with very good good blue color. One is an unnamed seedling selection I found growing as a weed in a nursery. It has smaller blooms, but with pure blue coloration and a very nice habit. We are still evaluating it to determine if it is worthy of introduction. The other blue form is called 'Ellen's Blue'. It has very nice dark blue flowers with an orange eye. There is no hint of lavender in the color. Presumably a seedling of *Buddleia* x 'Lochin', it also displays attractive silver foliage. From what I have seen, this is the best blue available.

Lavender

Lavender is not my favorite color, and if it were not for *Buddleia* 'Orchid Beauty' I would skip the group as a whole. 'Orchid Beauty' has a remarkable bloom. its color is light orchid lavender. Upon close examination each flowers is a blend of numerous colors. The bloom itself is extremely long and narrow packed tight with numerous flowers. It is highly fragrant.

Yellow

Although there are not yellow cultivars of *Buddleia davidii* per say, I would be remiss if I didn't mention *Buddleia* x

weyeriana 'Honeycomb'. This hybrid is a cross between *B. davidii* and *Buddleia globosa*. The cultivar 'Honeycomb' is butter yellow and is markedly more refined than 'Sungold'. The plant was a chance find by Mike Dirr, and has quickly become the most popular yellow form.

Conclusion

Well, there you have it. I've narrowed 57 selections down to thirteen! No easy task for such a diverse and wealthy species. Nearly all the selections are beautiful plants and there are only a few varieties that I would advise one not to grow. There is enough diversity and distinction to be growing and selling more than a purple, a pink and a white assortment. Butterfly Bush is a great plant, that is adored by all who know it and grow it. The public is demanding variety and we should offer it. This is especially true for such a great plant as *Buddleia*.

[bookmark this on Delicious](#)

be the first to bookmark this



Click on the feed logo to subscribe to our New Garden Plant web blog



Click on the feed logo to add our New Garden Plant web blog to your MyYahoo

All Rights Reserved, Copyright: (C) Spring Meadow Nursery, Inc. Tel: 616-846-4729 Fax: 616-846-0619 Email: [Sales](#)