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Abelia: The Versatile Shrub

by Lydia Holley

Need an evergreen shrub? Want a shrub that sports long-lasting blooms? Need a shrub you can shear formally into a hedge? Do you prefer to have an accent shrub that has a beautiful mounding shape when kept informally? Want a shrub that grows large? Need a shrub you can keep small? Want glossy green leaves? Prefer colorful or variegated foliage?

Abelias are all this - and more!



Abelia x gradiflora has suddenly become the “it” shrub. And no wonder - no matter what you are looking for, abelias probably have it. How can this be? Because there are different cultivars of this shrub, all with different features. The older cultivars of abelias grow large, up to 10 ft tall. Then, there are newer cultivars that can stay as small as two to three feet high.

Older cultivars of abelias have glossy green leaves. Newer cultivars may have colorful or variegated foliage. There are cultivars that bloom white or pink. Abelias take well to pruning. You may shear abelias into a hedge, or you can choose to grow yours in a more natural state, as a rounded shrub. Most abelias will grow in full sun to part shade, and are considered deer resistant.

Abelia blooms are tubular shaped, which attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. After the blooms fall off, colorful sepals remain, and from a distance, the shrub looks like it is still blooming. To prune abelias into an informal shape, cut up to 1/3 of its stems to the ground in early spring. New stems will burst forth in an arching form.

Some of the most popular abelia cultivars are ‘Edward Goucher’, a pink blooming variety which grows to around 5 ft tall; ‘Kaleidoscope’, with yellow variegated foliage and pink blooms; ‘Rose Creek’, with white blooms and pink sepals; and ‘Twist of Lime’, which sports yellow and green variegated foliage with pastel blooms. There are other cultivars available, and new cultivars are being introduced regularly. Since each abelia cultivar has its own unique look, it is important that you see this plant in bloom before you determine which abelia would look best in your own garden. Since abelias are so versatile, you may find that you have room for several different types of these remarkable shrubs.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.