



CHRISTENSEN'S PLANT CENTER

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PRUNUS AND PREJUDICE

It is not so much my bias against the long-used Purple Sand Cherry as it is my new-found preference for the Eastern Ninebark, *Physocarpus opulifolius*. Bearing fruit in a bladder and with leaves of the European Highbush, this Rose family native has it all - adaptability to a variety of soils, to sun and partial shade, and to extreme temperatures (Zones 2 to 7).



The Eastern Ninebark is an escape – from the native to the formal landscape. It has been transformed into one of our newest and most varied selections for the landscape. The woodland green foliage has been hybridized into reds, purple, coppers, and gold. One only familiar with the native would hardly recognize these transformations except by leaf

shape and flower. Both the graceful and colorful stems and the creamy corymbs offer florist-quality arrangements throughout the landscape.



The corymbs of the Ninebark are a collection of flowers with proportionate lengthening stems, forming a near globe. The trait also reveals itself in the fractal nature of several of

its new introductions. The hybrids 'Diabolo', 'Summer Wine', 'Coppertina' and 'Little Devil' respectively demonstrate this proportionate nature with respect to over-all size of plant, leaf and corymb as well as branching habit of leaves and stems.

The name *Physocarpus*, or Bladder-fruit, certainly fits its native character. But



Jeff Good

**Christensen's Plant Center
6282 Gotfredson Road
Plymouth, Michigan 48170
(734) 454-1400 voice
(734) 454-1414 fax**

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Ninebark? Is the exfoliating character of its bark curiously peeling into 9-like curls? Or, is it the result of a corruption of its naming by German immigrants? Its exfoliating character reveals a smooth, chalky white skin as if it has 'No-Bark.' (in German, "nein"-bark). This trait is especially evident in the treeform 'Diabolo' Ninebark.



The native, the rarely-used has become everyday and anything but common.

JG – Plant Guy