



The Art Of Breeding

Some plants are supremely adaptable. But do you know why? We unfold the mystery of breeding.



My Monet™ Weigela

My Monet™ Weigela breeder, Bert Verhoef was impressed with the success of friend Herman Geers' weigela introduction through Spring Meadow.

A customer walks into a garden center, searching for something that will last longer than the summer, looks good in multiple situations and has a zing that will stay attractive through most of the year. Is your first thought a flowering shrub? Why not?

“Primarily, our goal is to bring to market shrubs that are as colorful and attractive as annuals or perennials, that can be brought right to the front of the garden, but are easier to grow,” says Tim Wood, product development manager at Spring Meadow Nursery. “We’re looking for plants that are lower maintenance, because people aren’t devoting the same amount of time to gardening. Shrubs are in a really good position in that respect.”

It’s Wood’s job to work with breeders all over the world to try and meet specific criteria Spring Meadow has set to introduce plants



under the Proven Winners brand. It starts with a relationship with a breeder, and that can be more important than any step in the process. “Success breeds success, especially in breeding plants,” says Wood. “It gives breeders confidence to bring you more plants.”

A LONG PROCESS

Breeding doesn’t just start and end with finding the right cultivar. Spring Meadow does internal breeding and taps a network of

In The Spotlight



Quick Fire®

Hydrangea paniculata 'Bulk'

The first to bloom! Quick Fire® was selected because it blooms about a month before other *Hydrangea paniculata* varieties. The flowers turn pink very quickly, and will be an extremely dark rosy-pink in the fall. Quick, easy to grow and trouble free, the flowers are not affected by soil pH. They are produced on new wood, and will bloom even after the harshest winters.

Hardiness: USDA Zones 4-9

Bloom Time: Mid-summer

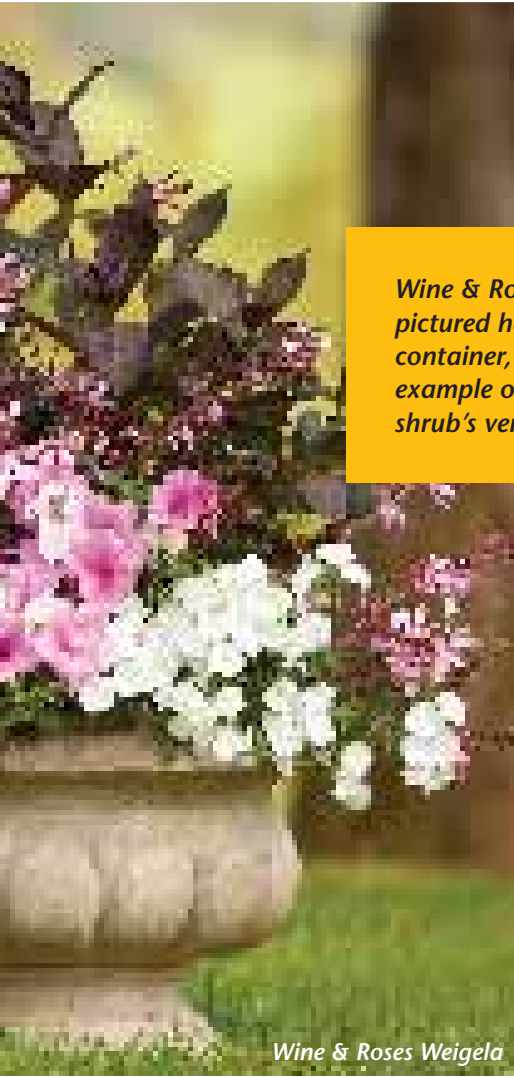
Bloom Color: Rich, deep pink

Foliage: Green

Size: 6-8 feet tall at maturity; 3-5 feet wide

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Soil: Prefers good, loamy soil; most adaptable of all hydrangeas to different soil types.



Wine & Roses® Weigela, pictured here in the mixed container, is the classic example of a flowering shrub's versatility.

Wine & Roses Weigela

breeders around the world to continue to find the most maintenance-free, striking plants they can. Sometimes cultivars come from new breeders who are looking to break into the market. Spring Meadow uses an on-site trial garden to accumulate every possible cultivar of a particular species of plant and assess its attributes. Spring Meadow's new product development team has a number of criteria used to evaluate potential varieties. This list includes: multiple seasons of interest, presenting well in a container and requiring little maintenance, among many others.

The timetable to get a plant from beginning to retail shelf varies from three years to 10. "If (the breeder) has a plant and it meets a majority of our selection criteria, and the plant has been grown and evaluated ... it can be as little as three years," notes Wood. "If the breeder has one plant, not tested thoroughly, it could easily take up to 10 years."

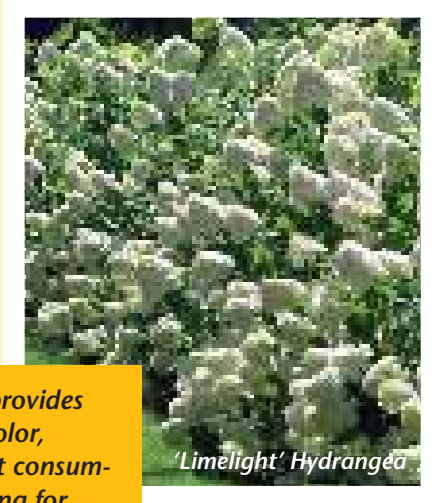
Wood says he considers the work he does with breeders a "long-term relationship," that instills trust in the breeder. "We have to put the needs of the breeder before the needs of the nursery in many respects and do what's right by them. If we do that and we're successful, then the goal is they bring us a second plant or recommend us to another breeder."

A TIMELESS CLASSIC

Because of the time it takes to get new shrub varieties to the marketplace, shrub producers cannot create the quick turnaround on trends that say, the apparel industry is seeing now. That's not necessarily a bad thing, according to Wood. "The industry can only digest so much on a regular basis," he says. "If you concentrate on the attributes of a particular plant ... to provide added value to growers and to the end consumer, even if a plant doesn't come to market as quickly as you'd like it to, it's going to have the attributes that will make it a success." The key is, the plant has to have the proper qualities that make it a timeless classic – foliage color that makes it attractive almost year-round, a habit that makes it versatile in the landscape, and easy in the garden.

LISTENING TO THE END CONSUMER

Flowering shrub companies have created marketing campaigns to show end users how these



'Limelight' provides months of color, exactly what consumers are looking for.

'Limelight' Hydrangea

plants fit in their gardens. "I don't think that it always matters if (success) comes from a weigela or spirea, as long as it provides color. Part of it is choosing the type of species you're working with – some plants are just naturally finicky and more difficult to grow. Other plants are more widely adaptable." ●

Meet With Spring Meadow Nursery

Check out the following schedule to find Spring Meadow Nursery at your favorite trade show this winter:

- Mid States Hort Expo - Booth #1233 (Jan. 4-5, Louisville, Ky.)
- Western Nursery Show - Booth #505 (Jan. 7-9, Overland Park, Kan.)
- MANTS - Booth #1044 (Jan. 10-12, Baltimore, Md.)
- Great Lakes Trade Expo - Booth #806 (Jan. 9-10, Grand Rapids, Mich.)
- Mid-Am - Booth #202 (Jan. 17-19, Chicago, Ill.)
- CENTS - Booth #5026 (Jan. 22-24, Columbus, Ohio)
- New England Grows - Booth #2618 (Feb. 6-8, Boston, Mass.)

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Meet Chris Warner, breeder of the **Oso Easy™** Roses line, at the Mid-Am Show in Chicago (Jan. 17-20) each day at Spring Meadow Nursery's booth - #202.