

## 'Harbour Dwarf' Nandina (*Nandina domestica*): Noninvasive in South Florida and Recommended with Caution in Central and North Florida<sup>1</sup>

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### Description

'Harbour Dwarf' nandina is a noninvasive selection of the invasive ornamental, *Nandina domestica*, as determined by the University of Florida/IFAS Infraspecific Taxon Protocol<sup>3</sup>, a tool used to evaluate invasiveness of cultivars and varieties. 'Harbour Dwarf', a dwarf form of nandina, is a low-growing evergreen shrub characterized by short, upright, cane-like stems that grow from a "crown" of basal buds at the soil surface (Figure 1; Gilman 2007).

Growth is dense and compact, resulting in the overall effect of a mounded plant form. Unlike most other cultivars, 'Harbour Dwarf' has 2–4-in. rhizomes that can slowly grow outward from the "crown" and form new stems. This rhizomatous growth increases plant density and width, making 'Harbour Dwarf' especially effective as a shrubby groundcover.

'Harbour Dwarf' differs from the species type of *Nandina domestica* in being distinctly compact and significantly shorter, and in having leaves that are



**Figure 1.** 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina has dense, compact growth resulting in a mounded form.

larger, longer, and lacier in appearance. University of Florida research in North and South Florida showed that 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina produced flowers in April and May in both locations, but fruit only formed in North Florida (Knox and Wilson 2006). The number of fruits formed in North Florida was 97% less than on the species type.

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## Ornamental Characteristics

'Harbour Dwarf' appears very dense because leaves are closely spaced on the stems. The dark green leaves are double pinnately compound, giving individual leaves an airy and lacy appearance (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina has dark green leaves that are double pinnately compound, giving individual leaves an airy and lacy appearance.

Low temperatures in fall and winter turn the outer leaves of 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina burgundy (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Low temperatures in fall and winter turn outer leaves of 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina burgundy.

This coloration often persists until new growth flushes in spring.

'Harbour Dwarf' plants consistently received high visual quality ratings in a two-year University of Florida evaluation of nandina cultivars in North and South Florida (Knox and Wilson 2006). As a dwarf form of nandina, it often remains no more than 18 in.

tall for many years before eventually reaching a height of 32 in. Plants grown in North and South Florida for two years had a mean height of 8 in. and widths from 9 to 12 in. Plants grown in a North Florida landscape for nine years ranged in height from 24 to 32 in. and were up to twice as wide as they were tall.

## Uses

'Harbour Dwarf' nandina is widely planted in masses as a shrubby groundcover (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina is very effective when planted in masses as a shrubby groundcover. This photo shows a bed of mature 'Harbour Dwarf' nandinas planted nine years previously.

## Culture

'Harbour Dwarf' nandina grows best in moist, fertile soil under light shade. It tends not to persist in full sun or dry soils unless mulched and irrigated regularly. 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina is otherwise tolerant of most soil types. Furthermore, it is considered pest free and does not require pruning. As with the standard species type, 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina is hardy within USDA hardiness zones 6–10.

'Harbour Dwarf' plants may form berries 8–16 weeks after flowering. Most fruits fall before maturing, but small numbers may persist, maturing to a red color in winter (Figure 5). The red berries should be removed to prevent wildlife from feeding on the fruit and spreading seeds to natural areas. 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina is commercially propagated by division, cuttings, or tissue culture; it does not come "true" from seed.





**Figure 5.** 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina may form red berries after flowering. Most fruits fall before maturing, but small numbers may persist, maturing to a red color in winter. Red berries should be removed to prevent wildlife from feeding on the fruit and spreading seeds to natural areas.

## History

This plant was discovered in 1956 by Mr. W.C. Lowe at the site of a former nursery near Colfax, North Carolina (Meyer 1979). He noticed the dwarf plant in a group of seed-grown nandinias originally planted by the deceased nursery owner, Mr. C.L. Harbour. Mr. Lowe recognized the plant's novelty and value and purchased the dwarf nandina from the new property owner, naming it 'Harbour Dwarf'. Widespread promotion of 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina began in 1961 after purchase and use of the dwarf nandina by Fred C. Galle, director of horticulture at Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, Georgia. The first nursery listing of 'Harbour Dwarf' nandina was in the 1977 catalog of Monrovia Nursery, Azusa, California.

## For more information:

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## Additional Notes:

3. *Nandina domestica* cv. Harbour Dwarf ('Harbour Dwarf' nandina) has been evaluated using the Intraspecific Taxon Protocol [http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/intraspecific\\_taxon\\_protocol.html](http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/intraspecific_taxon_protocol.html) that is associated with the IFAS Assessment of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (IFAS Invasive Plant Working Group 2009). Based on evaluation through the protocol, the conclusion for *N. domestica* 'Harbour Dwarf' is that this is not a problem cultivar in South Florida and may be used there; furthermore, 'Harbour Dwarf' may be recommended with caution for use in Central and North Florida, where it should be managed to prevent escape.