DOMBEYA 'SEMINOLE' AND D. 'PINWHEEL', NEW CULTIVARS FOR LANDSCAPING IN THE SUBTROPICS

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Abstract. In April, 1973 the Subtropical Horticulture Research Unit, Miami, released two cultivars of Dombeya to nurserymen in subtropical areas of the United States. Dombeya 'Seminole', P.I. 377867, is a hybrid of D. burgessiae, E-29 x D. sp. aff. burgessiae 'Rosemound'. This medium-sized shrub is covered with red flowers from early December through March. Dombeya 'Pinwheel', P.I. 377868, is a selection from open-pollinated seedlings of D. sp. S-12 grown at the Miami Station. This small tree with a semi-dense rounded crown bears purplish pink flowers during October and November. These Dombeya cultivars grow well in sunny locations on Florida's sand and limestone soils. Either cultivar is small enough to fit well into the home landscape arrangement, providing bright color during the tourist season when color is most desirable.

It has been said by some that dombeyas are the "azaleas of south Florida" and indeed, to some gardeners who reluctantly left azaleas behind by moving into the warmer regions of the subtropics, dombeyas do provide a satisfactory substitute. To many they are more rewarding because of their newness and the extended blooming period within the genus. In Florida they bloom from September through March. This is the time of the year when colorful flowers are so much desired in this tourist oriented state (8). A few species have been grown in Florida, California, and Hawaii for many years. Only in recent years, however, has the popularity of the genus increased here, largely because of the development and release by the U. S. Department of Agriculture of the cultivars 'Rosemound', 'Perrine', and 'Pink Clouds' (4, 5).

Cameron (1), in his revision of Firminger's Manual of Gardening for India describes 6 species of Dombeya and 1 Astrapaea wallichii Lindl. (D. wallichii (Lindl.) K. Schum.), that were being grown in India in 1904.

The Dombeya bulletin of the National Botanic Gardens, Lucknow, India, describes 8 species and 10 hybrids from the period 1913-25 (6). It is not clear whether all of these were to be found at Lucknow, but certainly they were in other locations in India, because it was there that dombeyas first received recognition as landscaping plants after their introduction from Africa, Malagasy Republic, and the Mascarene Islands.

The first Dombeya to be planted at the Subtropical Horticulture Research Unit (U. S. Plant Introduction Station), Miami, was D. spectabilis Boj., later reidentified as D. x cayeuxii Andre. David Fairchild found it in 1907 in Funchal, Portugal, where it was being grown as a hothouse plant. It is a hybrid between D. mastersii Hooker f. and D. wallichii, produced at the Lisbon Botanic Garden in 1895 by Henri Cayeux, whose name it bears (2).

Since that first introduction, 16 species and 6 cultivars have been added to the Miami collection. Deliberate and spontaneous crosses between these have produced about 3 thousand plants, which have been grown to the flowering stage in field plots. Evaluation of these seedlings resulted in selection of the 3 cultivars already mentioned and 2 new cultivars, 'Seminole' and 'Pinwheel'. The latter were released by the Agricultural Research Service in April, 1973.

Description

Dombeya 'Seminole', P.I. 377867, is a hybrid between the D. burgessiae Gerr. ex Harv. cultivars E-29 and 'Rosemound', made in 1965. It is a dense, medium-sized shrub, with the hemispherical form of the male parent and the purplish-red flower color of the female parent. These features...
have combined to produce a shrub of outstanding beauty, with a bright show of color beginning early in December and continuing through March. Leaves are cordate, 23 cm. long by 17 cm. broad, alternate, margins crenate, dark green above and beneath, with scattered stellate hairs; flowers 3-4 cm. across, in many-flowered corymbs, petals 24 mm. long by 17 mm. broad, strong purplish red (Munsel hue 7.5 RP 5/12); sepals 20 mm. long by 5 mm. broad, curving away from the petals.

*Dombeya 'Pinwheel', P. I. 377868* is a selection from seedlings resulting from open-pollination of *Dombeya* sp. selection number S-12. It is a small tree with a semi-dense rounded crown. The purplish pink flowers produce a beautiful display of color during October and November. Each of the 5 petals curves forward from one side, producing a flower with the appearance of a toy pinwheel.

The leaves are cordate, 9 cm. long by 7 cm. broad, puberulent, 3-lobed, margins dentate; flowers are in few-flowered corymbs, 26 mm. across, petals 23 mm. long by 22 mm. broad, deep purplish pink (Munsel hue 7.5 RP 6/12); sepals as long as petals, 5 mm. broad, curving upward against the petals; pedicle, peduncle, and sepals pubescent.

**Culture**

Both cultivars fit well into the home landscape arrangement. They require a sunny exposure for heavy flower production and maximum fullness of bush. They thrive on the oolitic limestone and sand soils in the southern one-third of Florida, with twice-yearly applications of a 6-6-6 fertilizer mixture. Cooperators report that ‘Seminole’ grows well in clay soils of southern California and also in the light muck soils around Lake Okeechobee in Florida. In Florida and California, supplemental irrigation is required during the drier months, much as would be required for good culture of *Hibiscus*.

Noctuid larvae tentatively identified as *Alabama argillacea* (Hbn.) (cotton leafworm) and *Heliothis zea* (Boddie) (corn earworm) attack the foliage of ‘Seminole’ during late summer in Florida. An insecticide, such as carbaryl, will control this pest if applied as soon as the first damage is discovered. A second application is generally necessary 10 days after the first. This second application should not be applied after flowering begins, as *Dombeya* flowers always attract bees, which may be killed by the insecticide.

‘Seminole’ is readily rooted from cuttings. Four- to 6-inch tip cuttings may be rooted in a propagating bed of perlite, coarse sand, or a 1:1 mixture of perlite and peat moss. Cuttings may be taken at any season. The application of a rooting hormone is recommended to hasten the rooting. ‘Pinwheel’ has not been successfully rooted by the use of cuttings. However, air-layering has been successful on this cultivar.

Small container-grown plants of ‘Seminole’ have been brought into flower during the normal flowering season, and preliminary tests are now under way to determine its usefulness as a colorful pot-plant crop for the florist trade.

**Literature Cited**


