

Go wild for weigela!

Hybridizers have worked diligently in the last decade to bring gardeners many new cultivars of weigela, improving on their flowers, foliage and habit. In the past, a glorious display of spring flowers was their contribution to the landscape. Now, their growth habit, leaf colors and even prolonged bloom increase their interest once the riot of spring flowers has faded.

Weigela are easy to grow in average, well-drained soil and have no serious pest or disease problems. Most require full sun for best bloom, but also perform satisfactorily in part shade. An application of a balanced fertilizer in late winter prompts more blooms.

Hummingbirds love to sip nectar from their funnel-shaped red, pink or white flowers, but deer find them unpalatable.

Depending on the ultimate size of each cultivar, weigela are beautiful included in shrub borders, perennial gardens, foundation plantings, and as specimen plants in the landscape. The smallest types are even suitable for container plantings and edging along garden paths.

‘Shining Sensation’ quickly grows 5 to 6 feet tall and wide. It dons long arching branches of shiny, mahogany foliage from spring to fall and pink tubular flowers in May and June. A few blooms pop up throughout the rest of the summer.

‘Wine and Roses’ boasts glossy, dark burgundy foliage when planted in full sun. In part shade, leaves are less intensely colored. Bright, deep pink flowers provide a high-impact punch of color in striking contrast with the foliage. It grows 4 to 5 feet tall and wide.

The cultivars in the Sonic Bloom series bloom heavily in late spring followed by waves of rebloom until frost without deadheading. ‘Sonic Bloom Pearl’ displays white flowers; ‘Sonic Bloom Pink’ has dazzling rose-pink blooms; and ‘Sonic Bloom Red’ bears lipstick red flowers. They grow 4 to 5 feet tall and wide.

Utilize these taller varieties as a hedge, in a shrub border, or as a specimen in the landscape. Let them grow into their naturally weeping form or prune them to a more manicured shape.

Truly a three-season weigela, ‘Rainbow Sensation’ flaunts green and yellow variegated foliage with whispers of pink from spring until fall. The profusion of soft pink flowers creates a lovely pairing of flowers and foliage on this 3 to 4 foot shrub in late spring.

‘Fine Wine’ grows 2 to 4 feet tall and wide. It is noted for its compact shape, rose-pink flowers and dark burgundy foliage. Expect some repeat bloom after its impressive spring performance. ‘Fine Wine’ holds its burgundy leaf color better than some other varieties.

These mid-size cultivars are ideal for foundation plantings or toward the front of a shrub border.

‘Spilled Wine’ grows up to 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide. It has rich, purple foliage that deepens to near black as summer progresses. In spring, an abundance of vivid pink flowers blooms and then rewards gardeners with sporadic flowers the rest of the summer.

‘My Monet’ is a little cutie (and my favorite cultivar) reaching just 12 to 18 inches tall and wide. It has cream, green and pink variegated leaves so showy I wouldn’t care if it never bloomed, but it does show off sweet pink flowers in spring.

Replace the cream with chartreuse on the leaves to ‘My Monet’ and you have ‘My Monet Sunset’. Similar in size and habit to ‘My Monet’, it sports dark pink flowers.

The bright pink flowers of ‘Midnight Wine’ shine against its deep purple foliage. Just 12 inches tall and up to 18 inches wide, it is gorgeous partnered with grey-leaved perennials like lamb’s ears or Artemesia ‘Silver Mound’.

The compact cultivars are perfect for perennial borders, along pathways, and in large containers.

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