



Weigela Goes Modern

Gardeners of a certain age may remember when the weigela was regarded as a relic of Victorian times and not worthy of a serious place in contemporary gardens. Times have changed and the newly introduced weigela cultivars are some of the hottest ornamental plants going today. Remarkable improvements have been made in foliage, plant habit, and winter hardiness. Once known solely for a glorious display of spring flowers, modern cultivars now also boast a variety of leaf color and growth habits. Attractive, colorful foliage provides season-long interest once the riot of flowers has faded. Cultivars have been selected for leaves that may be bright yellow, copper, burgundy, near black or variegated green with cream or gold. Flowers may be white, red, yellow or various shades of pink.

Weigela are easily grown in average, well-drained soil and are hardy to USDA zone 4. There are no serious pest problems. Most weigela require full sun for the greatest abundance of flowers but will tolerate very light shade. Prune to shape immediately after flowering. Weigela may remember Native to Japan, Korea, and Northern China, the common garden species, *Weigela florida* is a rounded to arching shrub that grows to 6 to 8 feet tall. It's easy to grow, reliably hardy and often prized for the funnel-shaped flowers that engulf the plant from May to June but there is little choice to try this year. Here are more than an occasional secondary flowering to recommend it for the rest of the growing season. Thanks to selective breeding, newer cultivars of *Weigela florida* exhibit a wide range of attractive, colorful foliage and tidy growth habits, providing season-long interest after the blooms have faded. Depending on ultimate size, weigela cultivars can make nice accents in shrub borders or mixed plantings. They make effective hedges and can also be judiciously incorporated into a foundation planting for the front or back yard. The more dwarf varieties are good choices for container plantings and as edging along walkways and around patios.

The funnel-shaped flowers of weigela are highly attractive to hummingbirds and may also attract butterflies. Weigela is noted to be a food plant for the larvae of the Giant Silkworm moth, a beautiful large moth found in every state of the U.S.

Easy to grow, reliably hardy and summer-long interest: all these qualities make Weigela a top choice to try this year. Here are some specific varieties to look for at your local nursery:

Taller varieties for hedges and mixed shrub borders:

Award winning 'Wine and Roses' boasts large, glossy, dark burgundy-purple leaves and vivid, deep pink flowers. It grows 4 to 5 feet tall and develops the best leaf color in full sun. Wine and Roses is an excellent, non-thorny alternative to the Japanese barberry, which is falling into increasing disfavor due to its tendency to invade native woodlands.

'French Lace' is a 4 to 5 foot shrub with beautiful green and gold variegated leaves. Deep red tubular flowers cover the plant in May. 'French Lace' is hardier than the older cultivar 'Variegata,' which sometimes suffers from

tip dieback in colder winters. occurring in mid to late summer. same way as one might use
Its purple-tinged leaves retain perennials or annuals. Attractive
'Fine Wine' grows to 2 to 4 good color throughout the pink flowers appear in spring and
feet tall and wide. This weigela growing season. the colorful foliage provides color
cultivar is noted for its compact all season long.
shape, pink flowers and dark 'Pink Poppet' boasts a profusion
burgundy foliage. Trumpet- of shell pink blossoms in spring Weigela 'Midnight Wine' has
shaped, rose-pink flowers cover followed reliably by a second purple leaves and pink flowers
the plant in May with scattered crop of flowers in late summer. It and is known for its unique
repeat bloom occurring through- grows up to 2 feet in height and dwarf mounded habit. Midnight
out summer. The leaves hold spreads 2 to 3 feet wide. It Wine grows only 8 to 10 inches
good burgundy color throughout maintains a nicely rounded shape tall and twice as wide. Its unique
the growing season. and bears bright green leaves habit makes it an excellent shrub
throughout the summer. Pink for the front of the border and can

Dwarf varieties for the perennial border: Poppet makes an excellent easily be integrated with
accent plant in rock gardens and gray-leaved perennials such as
works well in the perennial Artemesia 'Silver Brocade'. It is

'Minuet' is a hardy, strong border. also another good alternative to
blooming plant with purple tinged the invasive Japanese barberry.
foliage and purplish red flowers. It 'My Monet' is a petite little
typically grows to only 2 to 3 feet beauty with cream, pink and These are just a select few
tall and spreads to 3 to 4 feet green variegated leaves on a 10 varieties. Plan to visit the many
wide. The slightly fragrant, funnel to 16 inch tall plant. Its small size wonderful public gardens in the
-shaped flowers bloom profusely and compact habit make it a area to see these and others "in
in spring with a sparse and great choice for a mixed border, person."
scattered repeat bloom often where it can be used in much the