

# Cool Splash™ Diervilla A New Introduction From The Landscape Plant Development Center

by Rita L. Hummel, Washington State University Puyallup Research and Extension Center

Officially named *Diervilla sessilifolia* 'LPDC Podaras' (Plant Patent #19391) Cool Splash™, this latest introduction from the Landscape Plant Development Center is a low-growing, suckering, deciduous shrub native to eastern North America (shown in Figure 1). Commonly called Southern Bush-honeysuckle, *Diervilla* (pronounced DEER-vil-a) has small sulfur-yellow flowers borne in terminal clusters from late June through August (shown in Figure 2). The species *Diervilla* grows 3-5 ft. tall and spreads as wide or wider. Cool Splash™, with its striking white leaf margins, may be somewhat smaller than the species, in the 2 to 3 ft. range.

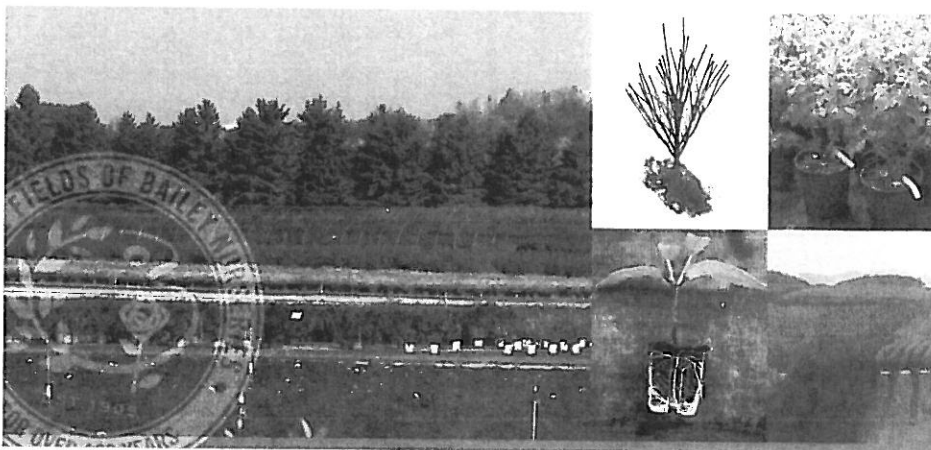
Cool Splash™ was selected for its white variegation from among thousands of seedlings by Peter

Podaras while working for The Landscape Plant Development at Cornell University. The Landscape Plant Development Center, a national, not-for-profit research organization, is devoted to developing superior landscape plants that are tolerant of insects, diseases, and environmental stresses. Developing improved cultivars of native plants is an important part of the LPDC's efforts to provide superior plants for sustainable landscapes. Cool Splash™, the fourth new plant from the LPDC, is being introduced in 2009 by Bailey Nurseries through the Novalis Plants that Work® program.

As a cooperator with the Landscape Plant Development Center, I was able to obtain a #3 container-grown Cool Splash™ plant for testing in advance

of its 2009 release. The plant as seen in Figure 3 was about 18 inches tall and 20 inches wide when transplanted to the landscape in Puyallup the last week of June 2008. This time of transplant coincided with the start of Washington's summer dry-weather. Because lack of water is typically the major stressor of summer-transplanted plants, Cool Splash™ was thoroughly watered—2 to 3 times per week depending on temperature and rainfall. The soil is a sandy loam and Cool Splash™ is situated on the west side of a white wood building where it receives about 5 hours of full sun daily. Figure 4 shows the plant in early October, after 14 weeks in the landscape, it has grown to about 22 inches tall with a spread of 28 inches and remains a striking specimen with its showy white variegation.

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Michael Dirr calls the species, *Diervilla sessilifolia*, a "tremendously tough plant" that did well in Illinois evaluations when exposed to -20°F and "incessant winds" (1998, Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, Stipes Publishing, Champaign, IL). Catherine Neal, Ornamental Horticulture Extension Specialist, recommends *Diervilla sessilifolia* as a shrub to consider using in place of the invasive burning bush or barberry in New Hampshire ([http://extension.unh.edu/resources/representation/Resource000560\\_Rep582.pdf](http://extension.unh.edu/resources/representation/Resource000560_Rep582.pdf)). Donald Wyman in his 1971 classic, *Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia* says of *Diervilla sessilifolia* "It is of little value as a specimen or in a good garden, but can be counted on to aid in holding the soil on banks or in rugged terrain where better plants will not grow." Obviously Donald Wyman had not seen Cool Splash™! The white-margined green leaves demand attention making Cool Splash™ an exciting new introduction for small spaces, borders, mass plantings or large containers.

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**Figure 1.** The Landscape Plant Development Center's new introduction, *Diervilla sessilifolia* Cool Splash™, is a low-growing shrub with striking white-variegated green leaves. Photograph courtesy of Harold Pellett.



**Figure 2.** *Diervilla sessilifolia* Cool Splash™ has sulfur-yellow flowers borne in terminal clusters on new-growth from late June through August. Photograph courtesy of Harold Pellett.



**Figure 3.** *Diervilla sessilifolia* Cool Splash™ in late June 2008 just after transplanting from a #3 container into the landscape at Puyallup, Washington.



**Figure 4.** *Diervilla sessilifolia* Cool Splash™ growing in the landscape at Puyallup, Washington. The photo was taken in early October, 14 weeks after transplanting.