



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Nandina domestica*¹

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Introduction

With bamboo-like stalks and delicate, ferny foliage, *Nandina* is much-prized for its oriental effect and distinctive appearance (Fig. 1). Adding to its appeal are large, erect panicles of creamy white flowers in spring followed by decorative bright red berries in fall and winter. Berries are eaten by a variety of birds. *Nandina* spreads slowly by underground stems, providing attractive clumps for entryways, containers, or as specimen plantings in a ground cover. They also add an accent to the front of a shrub border when planted in groups or clumps. Plant on 2 to 3 foot centers for a mass planting, farther for a more open effect.

General Information

Scientific name: *Nandina domestica*

Pronunciation: nan-DEE-nuh doe-MESS-stick-kuh

Common name(s): Nandina, Heavenly Bamboo

Family: *Berberidaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 10 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: border; specimen; container or above-ground planter; mass planting; accent; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size)

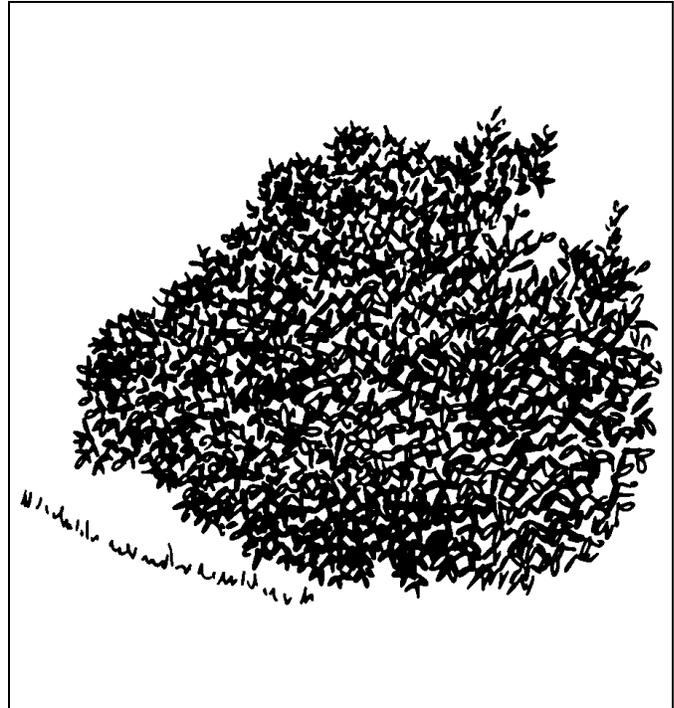


Figure 1. *Nandina*.

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 5 to 8 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: open

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: tripinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: pinnate; reticulate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: purple or red

Fall color: red

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristic: persists on the plant; attracts birds

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: reddish

Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: potentially invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Nandina is a low maintenance shrub, requiring only one pruning each year to control plant height, if needed. The tallest canes should be trimmed to the ground or to different heights in early spring to reduce the size. This will provide for more foliage toward the ground and promote a denser plant. Recent selections have produced several dwarf cultivars, described below. Although most of these do not flower and fruit, they do produce vividly-colored fall foliage and can be used as a ground cover. Some are nicer than others.

Nandina grows and flowers well in partial shade but will exhibit richer-colored red fall foliage if planted in the sun. Foliage diseases will be less in full sun. Although tolerant of drought once established, rich soil and ample moisture will produce a lusher, better-looking plant. Plants survive with neglect, although regular fertilization encourages growth and thicker plants.

Dwarf cultivars available include: 'Atropurpurea Nana' is a rather ugly, reddish plant; 'Compacta', purplish winter color, 4 feet tall; 'Firepower', red to maroon fall foliage, 2 feet tall, virus free which gives it superior foliage; 'Gulfstream', reddish-bronze fall foliage, 4 feet tall, upright habit, suckers from the base; 'Harbor Dwarf', bronze fall foliage, 1.5 to 2 feet tall; 'Moonbay' and 'Nana Purpurea', both are rounded and spread, and they have red fall foliage and are 1.5 to 2.5 feet tall; and 'Woods Dwarf', red to maroon fall foliage, 1.5 feet tall. The dwarf cultivar 'Lowboy' flowers and produces red berries, reaches 3 feet in height, and has red fall foliage.

Propagation is by seed or division.

Plants are generally only bothered by scale and mites.

Pests and Diseases

Leaf spot diseases often cause the lower leaves to drop from the plant in the humid regions of the nation. The disease appears to be most severe on plants grown in partial shade where the foliage can remain wet. Plants remain uniformly dense to the ground in the desert southwest.

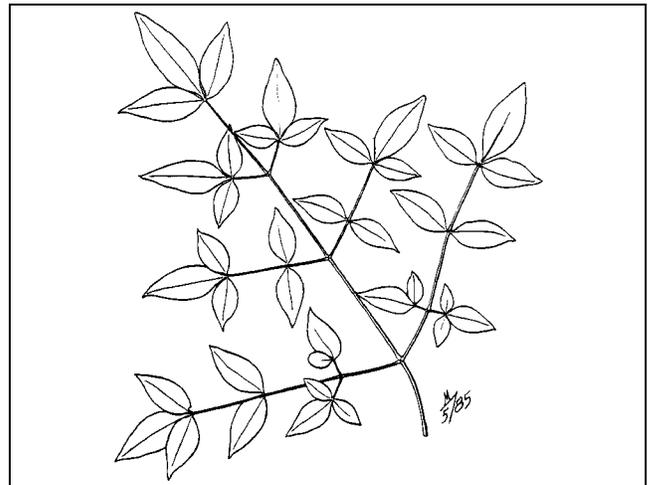


Figure 3. Foliage of Nandina