Nandina domestica ‘Harbor Dwarf’

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Introduction

‘Harbor Dwarf’ Nandina is a dense, compact cultivar of Nandina domestica (Fig. 1). It branches from the ground to form a dense mound about 18 inches in height. Dwarf Nandina has smaller leaves and more branches than the species. Small, pink or bronze, tripinnately compound, leaves emerge in spring and turn orange to red in the winter. The flowers and fruits of this cultivar are also smaller than the species and less abundant.

General Information

Scientific name: Nandina domestica ‘Harbor Dwarf’
Pronunciation: nan-DEE-nuh doe-MESS-stick-kuh
Common name(s): ‘Harbor Dwarf’ Nandina
Family: Berberidaceae
Plant type: ground cover
USDA hardiness zones: 7 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: container or above-ground planter; mass planting; ground cover; foundation; edging; 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)
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet
Spread: 1 to 3 feet
Plant habit: round
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: slow
Texture: fine
Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound
Leaf margin: undulate
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: rarely fruits

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches
**Other**

**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Harbor Dwarf Nandina is used in the landscape as an attractive and graceful ground cover or edging. Plant on 18-to 24-inch-centers to form a thick ground cover. It is an interesting plant all year round.

Nandina domestica ‘Harbor Dwarf’ will grow well when given full sun or partial shade. It tolerates most well-drained soils and will endure periods of drought. The canes of this plant do not branch but there are many stems originating at ground level to thicken the plant. Harbor Dwarf Nandina is commonly propagated by semi-hardwood cuttings in the fall. The largest advances in propagation are in tissue culture to produce virus-free plants.

Other dwarf cultivars include ‘Compacta’ - slower growing than the species with smaller leaflets, but eventually reaches 5- to 7-feet-tall; ‘Nana Purpurea’ - to about 18-inches-tall with coarse foliage turning bright, glossy red in winter; ‘Woods Dwarf’ - same as above, 18 inches tall best for the full sun.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.