

## Trial of *Cordyline* 2002-2004 An Invited RHS Trial

The objective of the trial was to assess the performance and quality of *Cordyline* for summer display, grown in containers.

Plants for entries 1-9 were received in 3L pots in January 2002, entries 10-20 received February to April 2002 as plugs and small plants. These were grown on in containers under glass for protection and were treated with *Phytoseiulus*, a biological control for red spider mite. Plants were regularly sprayed to prevent leaf spot diseases. Three plants per entry were then potted on into 10L pots (if appropriate) in May 2002 using an open, free draining compost containing a base fertiliser and were fed once a week with a liquid fertiliser. In October plants were moved to over-winter in a polytunnel and were periodically fed with a high potassium feed.

At the beginning of March 2003 plants were potted up into containers using a peat reduced compost, containing a slow release fertiliser. Entries 1-9 were potted on into 40L containers, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 1 plant of entry 19 were potted up into 10L containers. 13, 15, 20 and 1 plant of entry 19 were potted up into 16 cm pots. This was due to the varying size of entries when they were submitted to the trial.

Entries were placed outside in a sheltered position in mid March and watered as required.

Entry 21 was received in May 2003 in 3L pots.

In April plants requiring support due to the effects of the wind were staked.

There were 21 entries in the trial submitted by various nurseries in the UK. The Floral Trials Subcommittee assessed entries 1-10 between June and August 2002, and a further twelve entries 11-21, which were too small for assessment in 2002, between July and September 2003 based on the following criteria:

- ❖ impact
- ❖ colour
- ❖ habit (including number and texture of leaves, width of leaves and evenness of their distribution)

### Findings

It was found that *Cordyline* are not stable unless vegetatively propagated via toes (or knees), and when micropropagated can be variable.

### Botany

#### Parentage of *Cordyline* cultivars

Many of the plants included in the *Cordyline* trial appeared to be of hybrid origin. *C.* 'Red Fountain' is stated by the raiser to be a triple hybrid between a *C. australis* × *C. banksii* cross and the low-growing *C. pumilio* and not, as is sometimes stated, *C. banksii* × *C. pumilio*. Of the others the parentage of *C.* 'Purple Tower' is known to be *C. australis* × *C. banksii*, distinguished by its broader lamina, distinct petiole, reduced stem and venation which diverges to the leaf margins rather than being strictly parallel as in *C. australis*. These characters, in combination with a distinct reddening of the mid rib, seem to indicate that several of the other cultivars in the trial cannot be attributed to straight *C. australis* and are, in this report, listed under genus and cultivar alone, subject to further investigation.

#### Variegated *Cordyline* cultivars

The distinctiveness of *C. australis* 'Torbay Dazzler' from the old cultivar *C. australis* 'Albertii' has long been queried. This question is difficult to answer conclusively as descriptions of 'Albertii' are very mixed and the plants themselves show considerable variation, from narrow-leaved specimens with marginal banding to much broader-leaved examples with wider variegation that closely resemble 'Torbay Dazzler'. A satisfactory resolution will require an in depth study. *C. australis* 'Sparkler', which was not included in trial, is a new introduction said to be a sport of 'Torbay Dazzler' that is stronger growing and more brightly coloured.

## Index of Trial Entries

No.	Correct name (Name entered under – if different)	New Award	Colour of foliage and observations.	Sender
2	<i>Cordyline australis</i> AGM (H3) 1993		Green with paler midrib	Hillier Nurseries
12	<i>Cordyline australis</i> AGM (H3) 1993		Green with lighter mid-rib.	Hewton Nursery
1	<i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Emerald Isle' ( <i>Cordyline</i> 'Emerald Isle')		Bright green, narrow leaves	Hillier Nurseries
3	<i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Torbay Dazzler' AGM (H3) 2002	AGM (H3) 03 for bedding and containers	Green with variegated white stripes and slight pink flush to base.	Hillier Nurseries
13	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Autumn'		Green with reddish midrib and base to leaves. Similar to 'Sundance'.	Proculture Plants
16	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Coffee Cream' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Coffee Cream')		Purple with green midrib and leaf base. Needed staking. Microprop sport of C. 'Pink Stripe'.	Hewton Nursery
11	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Emerald Isle' DIED		Bright green	Proculture Plants
15	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Krakatoa' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Krakatoa')		Red brown leaves with pink markings on the mid-rib. Leaves fade to white as they age.	Hewton Nursery
21	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Lemon Fountain'	AGM (H3) 03 for bedding and containers	Glossy green with irregular streaks of pale green and yellow.	Hewton Nursery
5	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Pink Stripe' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Pink Stripe')		Purple with pink midrib and stripes. Leaves in centre start off green.	Hillier Nurseries
9	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Purple Tower' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Purple Tower')	AGM (H3) 03 for bedding and containers	Deep purple. Lower leaves fade to an off green. Very broad leaves.	Hillier Nurseries
17	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Purple Tower' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Red Sensation')		Deep purple. Lower leaves fade to an off green. Very broad leaves.	Hewton Nursery
18	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Purple Tower' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Sundance')		Deep purple. Lower leaves fade to an off green. Very broad leaves.	Proculture Plants
10	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Red Fountain'		Long, narrow, arching, dark glossy red foliage. Does not form a trunk.	Notcutts Nurseries
6	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Red Sensation' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Torbay Red')		Dull purple red with lighter midrib.	Hillier Nurseries
7	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Red Sensation' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Red Star')		Dull purple red with lighter midrib.	Hillier Nurseries
8	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Red Sensation' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Red Sensation')		Dull purple red with lighter midrib.	Hillier Nurseries
20	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Red Sensation' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Red Star')		Dull brown red with slightly lighter midrib.	Proculture Plants
14	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Sundance' ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Purple Heart')		Green with pink midrib and leaf base. Has a slight purplish overtone.	Proculture Plants
4	<i>Cordyline</i> 'Sundance' AGM (H3) 2002 ( <i>Cordyline australis</i> 'Sundance')		Green with pink leaf base and midrib. Broad leaves.	Hillier Nurseries
19	<i>Cordyline</i> unnamed		Dull purple red with pink markings.	Hewton Nursery



## Summary of entries that received the Award of Garden Merit



### ***Cordyline australis* 'Torbay Dazzler' AGM (H3) 2002 and AGM (H3) 02 July 2002 for bedding and containers.**

Sent by and available from Hillier Nurseries. Votes (12-4) [Trial No. 3]

Plant 120cm tall, 140cm wide. Erect although older basal leaves drooping. Leaves, 75cm long, 4.2cm diameter at widest, 2.8cm diameter at narrowest (approximately 8cm from base of leaf), matt, colour closest to Yellow Group 6D variegated with colour closest to Yellow-Green 147A. The leaf base and midrib contain Orange-Red Group 31C. Veins are angled very slightly to the midrib - which is not particularly prominent.

NB *Cordyline australis* 'Torbay Dazzler' may be a synonym of *C. australis* 'Albertii' (see botany note above). Further study is required to resolve this issue and as sourcing many true plants of 'Albertii' has proven difficult an Award of Garden Merit was also given to 'Torbay Dazzler', which is widely available.

### ***Cordyline* 'Lemon Fountain' AGM (H3) 09 September 2003 for bedding and containers.**

Sent by Hewton Nursery. Votes (10-2) [Trial No. 21]

Plant 84cm tall, 110cm wide. Leaves, 63cm long, 2.5cm diameter at widest, 1.6cm diameter at narrowest (approximately 11cm from base of leaf), slightly glossy, colour close to Green Group 137A variegated with Yellow-Green Group 146C and a colour closest to Yellow Group 9C. Abaxial midrib and veins on lower adaxial leaf surface, a colour close to Orange-Red Group 34B. Veins almost parallel to midrib - which is not particularly prominent.

### ***Cordyline* 'Purple Tower' AGM (H3) 09 September 2003 for bedding and containers**

Sent by and available from Hillier Nurseries. Votes (10-3) [Trial No. 9]

Plant 155cm tall, 130cm wide. Erect although older basal leaves drooping. Leaves, 70cm long, 7cm diameter at widest, 3cm diameter at narrowest (approximately 8cm from base of leaf), matt, grey purple with a hint of red-brown - no equal on RHS Colour chart. Fades to a colour closest to Yellow-Green 148A. Veins angled to the quite prominent midrib.

#### **Addresses of senders to this trial**

Hewton Nursery, Bere Alston, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7BW

Hillier Nurseries, Ampfield House, Ampfield, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 9PA

Notcutts Nurseries, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 4AF

Proculture Plants Ltd, Knowle Hill, Badsey, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 7EN

If you would like further information on this trial contact		
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