

2016

DELAWARE

NURSERY & LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION

Plant of the Year

This year marks Delaware Nursery & Landscape Association's Twenty-Second Annual Plant of the Year selection. The 2016 Herbaceous plant is *Asclepias tuberosa*. The 2016 Woody plant is *Heptacodium miconioides*. These plants were chosen because they are particularly well suited to thrive in Delaware.

Asclepias tuberosa Butterfly Weed

Butterfly weed is one of our showiest native wildflowers. It is drought tolerant and is easily grown in full sun in an average to dry, well-drained location. This bushy, 1½ - 2 ft. perennial is prized for its large, flat-topped clusters of bright-orange flowers that bloom throughout the summer. Flowers are a nectar source for many butterflies, hummingbirds, bees and other beneficial insects. The leaves are a food source for monarch butterfly larvae (caterpillars). Flowers give way to spindle-shaped seed pods (3-6" long) that split open when ripe releasing silky-tailed seeds for dispersal by the wind. Seed pods are valued in dried flower arrangements. Butterfly weed does not transplant well due to its deep taproot, and is probably best left undisturbed once established.



Photo courtesy of North Creek Nurseries

Heptacodium miconioides Seven-Son Flower

Heptacodium is an outstanding specimen plant grown as a small tree or large shrub that reaches 15 to 25 feet with a spread of up to 12 feet. While typically multi-stemmed, it can also be trained as a single-trunk tree. The glossy leaves emerge in spring and remain attractive throughout the season. In late summer, creamy-white fragrant flowers appear in whorls within each branched cluster. Each whorl contains 7 tiny flowers (hence the common name of seven-son flower). Flowers are followed in fall by small, inconspicuous purplish-red fruits surrounded by a persistent calyx (the ring of petal-like leaves that forms the outer layer of a flower). The calyces turn a bright cherry red,

resulting in another spectacular display. Tan bark exfoliates to reveal attractive brown inner bark, which provides good winter interest. *Heptacodium* thrives in full sun and average soil, but has been known to flower and remain healthy in part-shade. Prune during the winter before flower buds have formed to maintain shape. It is a good source of nectar for butterflies in the fall.



Photo by Jason Veil

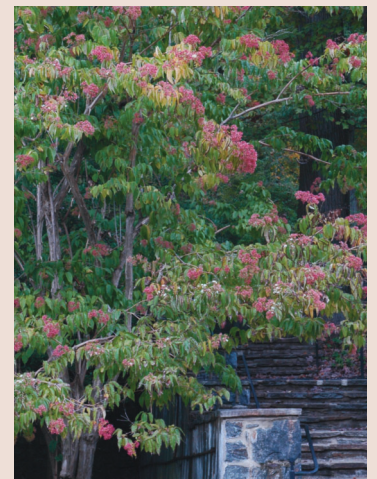


Photo courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library