



Nursery News

May 2007 - Research & Development
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May's Delight® Crabapple

April Showers Bring May's Delight®

Spring brings delight—moist dark soils, fresh new plant growth, sweet smelling gardens, and buzzing bees tempted by bright blossoms on flowering trees. One of the most widely planted flowering trees is the crabapple, because of the many variations in flower color, fruit, leaf and bark among the species and cultivars. McHenry County Nursery is delighted to have added to this collection a new hybrid Malus x 'Beeson' May's Delight®. This new Crabapple selection has a distinctive upright habit when young, and bright rose flower buds that open to a single pink flower that fades to almost white edged in rose. The fruit is dark burgundy-wine in color, but it does not bear fruit heavily. May's Delight® has reddish purple tinged foliage with a light underside and excellent disease resistance. The leaves take on an array of colors in the fall- orange, red and maroon.



The May In May's Delight® Crabapple

May Henningfeld was born on Valentines Day, 1919 and grew up on a dairy farm in a large German Catholic family with a knack for healing hurt animals. May graduated from a small High School in Waterford, Wisconsin at the top of her class. Most of her classmates never graduated from High School because they either were needed to work on the farm or

were already starting their own families, but May had dreams and a love of books and went to Chicago to study nursing. Soon after starting nursing school she enlisted in the U.S. Navy and became an officer as a Navy nurse. May cared for the wounded boys coming back from the Pacific when she was transferred to Oakland.

While stationed at Great Lakes Naval Base in North Chicago, she met a young Army Sergeant stationed at Fort Sheridan. His friend, Charles 'Buzz' Beeson was dating her best friend, but that soon changed. Prior to being shipped over to Europe, Charles proposed and May accepted. Luckily for this story Charles returned from the war and they started a family. Before the war Charles worked at Hook's Nursery, so he thought he would give landscaping on the North Shore a try. They had 'No' money, but it was often said by their friends that if potato peels were dollar bills May and 'Buzz' would have been millionaires. They saved everything and worked long and hard every day building a landscaping business, raising eight children, and keeping their faith in the American dream. The business prospered and the children grew and started their own



families. May started dreaming about some day living on a farm again. They eventually found a farm that they could afford out in the wilds of Harvard, Illinois and planned starting a nursery.

The year 'Buzz' planted some Sargent Crabapple seedlings, he knew something wasn't quite right. Every one was different. Some were large heavy fruiting upright forms, while others were dwarf weepers with few flowers and fruit. Two were pink flowered with red leaves, and one of those was 'stunning'. It bloomed heavy every year and had two-toned red

burgundy leaves that were disease free even during the worst years. It grew upright until about eight feet then started to spread out until it was as wide as it was tall. The abundant fruit was small and dark purple and persistent. The flowers were highly ornamental, with crimson buds opening light pink then fading to white with a rose wine stain on the lip of the petals. From a distance this crabapple caught the eye and drew the viewer in closer.

When Charles showed the crabapple to May she was delighted, and 'Buzz' knew immediately what the crabapple's name would be.



Inquiries or more information is available by contacting **McHenry County Nursery** Propagator Mary McClelland
Phone (815)943-TREE www.beesongrows.com mcn@beesongrows.com Fax(815)943-3511

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May's Delight® Crabapple

May's Delight® was transplanted in 1998 from the nursery as a 6-foot by 6-foot multi-stem plant to a landscape site for further observation. It proved to be a more vigorous grower than the Sargent crab and grew to 12 ft x 12 ft. It did not seem to be a heavy fruiter despite blooming heavily every year. The disease resistance matched that of other best performing crabapples- a desirable feature and hard to come by in the red-leaved crabs. May's Delight® is hardy in zone 4.

Making More of a Good Plant – Propagation

The 'children' of May's Delight® all came true to the mother tree and grew up strong and healthy. The first generation of May's Delight® moved out into the world and can be found in Connecticut, the Morton Arboretum, Anderson's Japanese Gardens, Old St. Pat's Church, Michigan Avenue, Longenecker Horticultural Gardens and out the kitchen window in May's backyard.



We have been propagating May's Delight® since 1999 from softwood cuttings in the summer with excellent takes. They are grown in containers as a multi-stem plant for several years maintaining a nice clump form, then lined out in our growing fields on contour. We are currently growing May's Delight® as a



multi-stem or shrub form crabapple. Other participating nurseries in the Chicagoland Grows Program are experimenting with budding and grafting methods for the May's Delight® to be grown in a tree form.

May's Delight® Crabapples are dug in the Spring before growth begins, to retain vigor in flowering and reduce shock

in moving the plant. They can be dug in the Fall as soon as September. May's Delight® prefers full sun for the best flowering and fruit, and moist well drained soil with pH 5-6.5. Crabapples are very adaptable, however, and tolerate many soils



including alkaline soils, clay soils, moderate soil salt, and also tolerate drought and pollution. May's Delight® is great for many Midwest landscapes from homes, schools, parks, and commercial and public landscapes, to highway plantings and urban sites. It is also an attractive tree for under utility lines.

Charles 'Buzz' Beeson passed away in 1995, and left a legacy of hard work, a love of trees and love for his wife May. He left his wife of 53 years a continuous reminder of his love in the form of a crabapple that blooms its heart out each spring, brightens the summer with its burgundy leaves and the fall with its yellow orange and red, and is decorated with small crabapples into the winter.

May continues managing her affairs, keeping her faith and going about her chores every day on her farm in Harvard. She has her health, children, grandchildren, dogs and cats, and acres of trees to view reminding her of the power of hard work and faith. Every spring she looks forward to the delightful blooming of the crabapples, especially on the May's Delight® outside her kitchen window.





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May's Delight® Crabapple

Longenecker Gardens

"May's Delight has prospered and did have some bloom this spring...My main interest is in fruiting qualities and scab resistance, so I will be watching it with interest."

Edward R. Hasselkus, Professor Emeritus, Horticulture, UW-Madison, Curator Longenecker Horticultural Gardens
http://uwarboretum.org/education/garden_tours/



Longenecker Gardens

Kansas State University- John C. Pair Horticultural Center

"...We have 3 plants of May's Delight. They are still small, so there is not much to report other than they are doing very well. Nice deep green foliage with purple/red new growth. Seems to be one of the more vigorous cultivars in the collection. I am looking forward to seeing how it does over time..." Jason J. Griffin, Assistant Professor, Kansas State University, Ornamentals Research, John C. Pair Horticultural Center
www.oznet.ksu.edu/rc_hefw/



May's Delight® can also be found at:

University of Idaho- Crabapple Research Grove
<http://info.ag.uidaho.edu/magazine/winter2005/science.htm>

Washington State University- National Crabapple Evaluation Project
http://mtvernon.wsu.edu/fit_hort/harvest_report_04.htm
http://mtvernon.wsu.edu/fit_hort/apples.htm

Anderson Gardens
<http://www.andersongardens.org/>

Morton Arboretum- Arbor House
<http://www.mortonarb.org/>



Morton Arboretum

Chicagoland Grows Inc. May's Delight® is one of the recent accessions of the Chicagoland Grows Program. Chicagoland Grows Inc., a partnership among the Chicago Botanic Garden, The Morton Arboretum, the Ornamental Growers Association and many growers across the northern zones of the states. This innovative cooperative plant introduction program selects, evaluates, produces, and markets new or recommended plant cultivars. Plants selected for the program are specifically well adapted to the Midwest, and are made available to the commercial and retail landscape industry through a regional, national, and international network of propagators and growers.