

**North Carolina Agricultural Research Service  
North Carolina State University  
Raleigh, North Carolina**

**Notice to Nurserymen of the Naming and Release of 'Merlot' Redbud**

The North Carolina Agricultural Research Service announces the release of the redbud (*Cercis*) cultivar 'Merlot'.

'Merlot' is a new and distinct cultivar of redbud being released as an alternative to 'Forest Pansy'. 'Merlot' was derived from a F<sub>2</sub> family resulting from the 1998 hybridization of 'Texas White' (*C. canadensis* var. *texensis*) x 'Forest Pansy' (*C. canadensis*). 'Merlot' was selected for its attractive purple leaf color and semi-upright growth habit, in contrast to the open, spreading habit of 'Forest Pansy'. Leaves of 'Merlot' are thicker and glossier than those of 'Forest Pansy', similar to its 'Texas White' parent. Leaves maintain their attractive appearance well into the latter part of the growing season, unlike those of 'Forest Pansy' which often become unattractive and necrotic in late summer in the southern U.S. Retention of purple color in leaves is similar to but slightly inferior to 'Forest Pansy'. Purple pigmentation in the leaf diminishes throughout summer, becoming burgundy before transitioning to green in late summer in North Carolina. 'Merlot' demonstrates semi-upright architecture, excellent branching, and dense growth, superior to 'Forest Pansy'. Flowering is prolific, and flower color is an attractive bright reddish-purple. Fertility of 'Merlot' is reduced compared to many redbuds. Fruit develop after flowering, but to date viable seed production has been limited. Trials of 'Merlot' and 'Forest Pansy' in Jackson Springs, North Carolina and Grove, Oklahoma have shown superior heat tolerance of 'Merlot' compared to 'Forest Pansy', typical of its 'Texas White' parent. 'Merlot' has been trialed for six years in Jackson Springs, North Carolina (USDA hardiness zone 7b), and it has proven fully cold hardy in this location. Long-term trials have not been conducted in other regions, but it is anticipated 'Merlot' will be well adapted to USDA hardiness zone 6 and higher.

The name 'Merlot' was chosen for this selection because of its attractive purple leaf color.

A plant patent application has been filed for 'Merlot', and plant patent rights will be assigned to NCSU. Propagation and production rights can be obtained from PlantHaven, Inc., Santa Barbara, California.



Director, North Carolina Agricultural Research Service

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Date