



Evaluation of *Abelia* Selections to Withstand Cultural Conditions in Containers

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Nature of Work: We have been developing new cultivars of *Abelia* through interspecific hybridization. Seedlings have been evaluated in field plots for cold hardiness, flower and sepal color, compact plant form, attractive foliage and heavy blooming. Selections have been made based on field performance, and evaluations are now needed on pot performance, to ensure that any cultivar releases are easy to propagate and grow well under nursery conditions. In addition, *Abelia* cultivars often fail to thrive in container nurseries during the hot summer months. The objective of this study is to evaluate our *Abelia* selections for container performance during the summer in full sun on gravel at the CANR.

Eleven selections and two cultivars were evaluated. Four of the selections were derived from *A. chinensis* × ‘Francis Mason’ (99-2-9, 99-2-15, 99-11-5 and 99-68-1), three were derived from *A. chinensis* × ‘Edward Goucher’ (99-6-7, 99-6-9, and 99-6-11), three were from *A. chinensis* × ‘Golden Glow’ (99-3-1, 99-3-5, and 99-15-5), and one was derived from ‘Edward Goucher’ × ‘Francis Mason’ (99-7-1). Two cultivars, ‘Compacta’ and ‘Prostrata’ were grown to provide a comparison to commercially available cultivars.

Three plants per selection or cultivar were repotted from 1-gallon containers into 3-gallon containers on May 21 using McCorkle’s growing medium consisting of 6:1 bark:sand, 4 lb lime/yd³, 1.5 lb micromax/yd³, 1.5 lb gypsum/yd³, 2lb Talstar/yd³ and Osmocote pro 22-4-6 at 4 lb/yd³. The plants were placed on gravel and were irrigated with overhead water. On July 9 and September 10, the height and width of each plant was measured. Sun scald, leaf drop, and floriferousness were rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with one indicating no sun scald, leaf drop, or flowering and 10 being high sun scald, severe leaf drop, and a high rate of flowering.

Results and Discussion: All of the *Abelia* selections and the two cultivars evaluated grew and performed well in containers (Table 1). Foliar chlorosis was not observed. Only one selection, 99-3-5, showed considerable leaf drop. Sun scald was quite high on 99-3-5, and was also observed, though not as severely on 99-2-9, 99-3-1, and 99-15-5. All of the selections with sun scald have yellow-green foliage. Floriferousness was high on many of the selections and on ‘Compacta’. One selection, 99-7-1, had only a few scattered blooms. Tendency to form spikes or long shoots out-of-proportion with the rest of the plant was particularly noteworthy on 99-6-7 and 99-6-9.

Table 1. Height, width, leaf drop, sun scald and floriferousness of *Abelia* selections and cultivars. Data collected on Sept. 10, 2003.

Plant ID	Height (cm)	Width (cm)	Leaf Drop Rating¹	Sun Scald Rating²	Floriferousness Rating³
99-2-9	49	67	1	3	8
99-2-15	39	56	2	1	8
99-3-1	47	72	1	3	6
99-3-5	52	84	5	5	5
99-6-7	65	85	1	1	9
99-6-9	54	95	1	1	10
99-6-11	47	67	1	1	10
99-7-1	59	95	1	1	2
99-11-5	37	62	2	1	8
99-15-5	48	73	1	3	7
99-68-1	57	71	1	1	7
‘Compacta’	51	89	1	1	7
‘Prostrata’	64	104	1	1	5

¹Leaf drop rating: 1 = no leaf drop; 10 = 100% leaf drop.

²Sun scald rating: 1= no sun scald; 10 = 100% photobleached foliage.

³Floriferousness rating: 1 = no flowers; 10 = very many flowers.

Significance to Industry

New cultivars are in demand by the nursery and landscape industries. *Abelia* is a drought tolerant, pest resistant shrub that is widely grown, but novel flower and foliage characteristics and improvements in growth habit, container performance and other traits are needed. Selections evaluated in this study performed well in containers, as well as in previous landscape studies. Some of these selections show promise as new cultivars, with outstanding floriferousness, flower cluster size, sepal color, novel form or foliage attributes.