UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION, ECOLOGICAL SCIENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

NOTICE OF RELEASE OF 'OCEAN VIEW' BEACH PLUM

The United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service announces the naming and release of 'Ocean View' beach plum (Prunus maritima Marsh.)

'Ocean View' beach plum (Prunus maritima Marsh.) originates from a cross of four superior strains that were selected from an assembly of 28 total seed accessions. They were selected for their exceptional survival, seedling vigor, foliage abundance, high level of disease and insect resistance, leaf retention, fruit production and cold tolerance. Ocean View has been field tested on coastal sandy sites from North Carolina to Maine. While the species Prunus maritima is commonly found growing within USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 4b-8b, the cultivar Ocean View presently is being recommended for use within zones 5b-8b. The states of origin of these four superior strains are Delaware, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

Description

Ocean View is an upright, salt tolerant shrub which is densely branched. On sand dunes the lower branches are often buried by shifting sand and roots begin to develop from the branches, this is known as layering. From this layering effect, beach plum can spread up to 6 m. In a sand dune environment, this shrub rarely exceeds 2.1 m in height, while inland it can reach heights of up to 5.5 m.

Ocean View has pale green foliage with alternate leaf and branching character. The serrated leaves are elliptical to ovate in shape; they range from 3.8 cm to 6.4 cm long and half as wide. The underside of the leaves are covered with fine hairs and paler than above, while the upper surface is rough and ridged.

In early spring, before the leaf buds break, axillary clusters of snowy-white blooms emerge. These flowers are .6 cm to 1.9 cm in diameter, and cover the actively growing crown of the shrub. Prior to falling off, these flowers take on a pink hue. At about the time the flowers drop off, the leaves emerge, protecting the developing fruit.

The edible purplish-black to red fruit are 1.3 cm to 1.9 cm in diameter; they are covered with a heavy, white, waxy film to protect them from fungi and disease. The single pit, contained inside the drupe type fruit, is truncate at the base ovate and swollen. The fruit ripens on the shrub from August to October, but sometimes remains on the plant in the form of a raisin well into the winter months.

Conservation Use

In an attempt to avoid monocultures of any one species of dune shrub, a native drought tolerant plant such as Ocean View is ideal to plant with bayberry (Myrica pensylvanica) and other dominant shrub species. It offers a thicket forming growth character with layering lower limbs to bind the back dune sands while producing edible fruit. It has great potential for diversifying the flora behind the foredune, and at the same time helps in the stabilization of those same sand dunes. When planted alone on an area without pre-existing dunes and vegetation, beach plum will establish with moderate success. Combine this shrub with pioneer dune grasses (American beachgrass, coastal panicgrass, sea oats, bitter panicgrass, etc.) in a sand dune rehabilitation system and within a few years this beach front area will become well vegetated and provide a high degree of protection from intense storms.

Ocean View is a multiple use type shrub. The characteristics which enable this shrub to perform well as a back dune stabilization plant also make it enticing for wildlife and residential use. Wildlife managers and enthusiasts of the Atlantic coastal plain will find Ocean View's full canopy and low persisting limbs to be useful escape cover and perches for songbirds, gamebirds, and small mammals. The succulent fruit which Ocean View produces is treasured in the fall by many bird species as well as small and medium size mammals. The foliage of beach plum are browsed by cotton tailed rabbits and white tailed deer. For bee-keepers, the dense early spring bloom of Ocean View's flowers can enhance early season honey production.

Planting Ocean View around residential areas will help attract wildlife into your backyard by providing a living bird feeder or birdhouse. The same planting of shrubs can be included in a privacy screen since it has dense foliage, or it can be utilized in the home landscape as an ornamental for its spring flowers and green foliage.

Establishment Techniques

Because of Ocean View's vigorous juvenile growth rate, the root system and stem produced by one-year-old seedlings may be more desirable for transplanting than that of two-year-old seedlings. The ideal plant size for healthy and vigorous 1/0 seedlings of Ocean View is 46 cm to 61 cm tall with a balanced root mass. For nursery production, fall seeding into raised beds yields the best seedling emergence.

On stable, coastal sand dunes, Ocean View seedlings should be planted at a depth of approximately 5 cm above the root collar, and no deeper than the root collar on inland soils. Fertilization is recommended for good establishment and vigorous plant growth. On back dune sites, it is also recommended that the fertilizer be applied to individual plants rather than the broadcast method. Broadcast applications in test plots have promoted dense stands of pioneering dune grasses, and have marginally improved the growth of back dune shrubs. This is probably due to the grasses out competing the seedlings during the establishment period.

The spacing which Ocean View beach plum is planted should be based on its intended use. On back dune planting sites, the plants of Ocean View should be placed 1.2 m to 1.8 m apart to provide a dense barrier of protective vegetation. When used inland for residential areas or wildlife plots, Ocean View should be planted 1.8 m to 2.4 m apart.

Foundation seed and plants will be produced by the Soil Conservation Service at the Cape May Plant Materials Center, 1536 Route 9 North, Cape May Court House, New Jersey 08210. Foundation seed will be available to commercial nurseries in January 1993.

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Date

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Date