



plant profile

Smoke Bush

compiled by David Musker

A very recent release this year is *Cotinus coggygria*, 'Young Lady'. *Cotinus* varieties are commonly called smoke bush because of the smoke like flowers produced in spring on the tips of stems. There are many varieties of *Cotinus*, 'Grace' being the most popular, with its light burgundy leaves turning brilliant orange in autumn. It produces grey flowers in early spring and can grow to three metres if left un-pruned, which is what I would do. 'Young Lady' has green leaves turning brilliant red in autumn and of course distinctly pink flowers at the tip of every stem - it is a more prolific flowerer than the other *Cotinus* and the only one with pink flowers. *Cotinus* are very hardy and can cope with full sun, wind and dry conditions. I have had *Cotinus coggygria* 'Flame' growing in a garden, unpruned, for 15 years and it is now a spectacular semi weeping, graceful, large shrub, with the most vibrant red autumn colour. I know that many people recommend pruning *Cotinus* back to the ground to keep the new growth fresh and colourful, and of course keeping the shape compact and manageable, but I much prefer the un-pruned look. Either way *Cotinus coggygria* 'Young Lady' promises to be a very popular addition. Thank

you to Don Teese for importing this plant from Holland.

The other plant to look out for is *Osmanthus heterophyllus*, 'Aureomarginatus'.

Osmanthus is a genus of about 35 species of evergreen shrubs and trees, native to the USA, Asia and the Pacific Islands. They are hardy plants with holly like leaves that produce small white scented flowers in spring. Generally *Osmanthus* have a dense growth habit that makes for good hedging plants and excellent specimens in a shrubbery. *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Variegatus' has variegated leaves of pale green and white, which makes it quite striking in a garden bed. I recently came upon 'Aureomarginatus' and instantly fell in love with the striking yellow green margins on its leaves of dark glossy green. I think this is a plant to use in any garden - the overall visual effect of its variegation is subtle and soft and it is a hardy, interesting shrub that will add an unusual element to any garden scene. *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Aureomarginatus' has been around for a long time but hasn't been seen for many years so it's wonderful to have it available again.