



Remaking Weigela

Bloomin' Easy's Weigela Electric Love® has electrifying red bell-flowers against dark foliage for a striking contrast. PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE NURSERY

New cultivars are breathing new life into an old favorite

BY EMILY HOARD

Weigela florida has been a longtime favorite, with its deer resistance, and ability to attract pollinators. It has also been used widely throughout the United States for creating privacy and screens. It was already a useful shrub.

But in the past few years, growers have developed new cultivars with more flowers and more compact forms with denser branches that don't need to be

pruned. They also keep their shape, adding even more versatility.

Longtime favorite

Tom Foley, director of product development at **Everde Growers** in Fallbrook, California, has been working with *Weigela* for several decades. He first learned of the plant while growing up in the Eastern United States. He said in most of the Northeast and Midwest, deer grazing is a significant problem for gardeners, but deer do not graze on *Weigela*.

"When I began to work in commercial horticulture, I focused on evaluating

ornamental shrubs for landscape performance, consumer appeal and nursery production capabilities," Foley said. "I became especially interested by *Weigela*'s versatility, vibrant floral display and ease of care. The plant is easy to root, fast to grow and flowers in the spring, when most retail sales occur."

Josh LaPoint, owner of **Standard Nursery LLC** in Lafayette, Oregon, has been working with *Weigela* for more than eight years. At the start, he was focused on classic varieties. These included 'Red Prince' (*Weigela florida* 'Red Prince') with its green leaves and red blooms, 'Merlot' >>

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Weigela Peach Kisses™ from Bloomin' Easy is a new and improved rebloomer that's loaded with peachy pink flowers from late spring through fall. PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE NURSERY

Rose' (*W. florida* 'Bokrafive' PP21725), with its burgundy leaves and pinkish red blooms, 'Rubidor' (*W. florida* 'Rubidor'), with its chartreuse leaves and red blooms, and 'Variegata' (*W. florida* 'Variegata') with its green leaves lined with a cream color and pink blooms.

Bill MacKenzie, who works in sales at **Meridian Young Plants**, said his first experience with *Weigela* was 25 years ago at the retail level, selling them to consumers. He was amazed by the striking foliage and many cultivars. These made it easy to sell many *Weigela* plants.

"From homeowners to landscape contractors, *Weigela* has been a popular choice for adding a colorful foliage palette that withstands the elements and is fairly forgiving on the maintenance side," MacKenzie said.

Shelby Klassen, program manager at **Bloomin' Easy**, said she has been able to



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Bloomin' Easy's *Weigela Afterglow*™ has dark foliage and cream and pink flowers that hold for weeks. PHOTO COURTESY OF VAN BELLE NURSERY

grow and trial many *Weigela* selections over the last eight years of her career in the horticultural industry.

“Part of my role as program manager for Bloomin' Easy is selecting new varieties of both shrubs and perennials to bring to market,” Klassen said.

Bloomin' Easy had eight *Weigela* varieties in its collection as of June 2025, with another, Watermelon Kisses™, that was set for introduction at Cultivate'25 in July.

“This new release is one of my favorite *Weigelas*, so make sure to keep your eye out for the release this summer,” Klassen said.

Pollinator friendly

Weigela are magnets for pollinators and hummingbirds, adding to their popularity.

“They love the trumpet-like flowers and I have even found a bee sleeping inside the flower,” Klassen said. “A source of nutrition and a safe habitat for our garden friends!”

“*Weigela* stands out for its sheer abundance of tubular flowers that attract pollinators — particularly hummingbirds

and bees — through spring and often with a repeat flush into summer,” Foley said.

Reblooming is most common in the new varieties of *Weigela*. Klassen said it results in two instances of full color in the garden, each lasting about three to four weeks.

This reblooming is very important for urban environments where flower accessibility for pollinators is typically more constricted, LaPoint said.

“If you love fruit, flowers and wildlife, you love *Weigela*,” LaPoint said.

Landscape design

“*Weigela* are a hardy shrub that withstand drought and provide foliage interest combined with vibrant, prolific blooms,” MacKenzie said.

The foliage comes in many different colors too, Foley said.

“The genus also offers some of the most vivid foliage contrasts available in deciduous shrubs, with chartreuse, deep burgundy and variegated leaf options providing color even when the plant isn't in bloom.”

In landscape design, *Weigela* is used in mass plantings, mixed borders or as a flowering hedge. Foley said compact



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varieties work well in containers or for foundation plantings. Larger cultivars provide a colorful screen to hide air conditioners and other man-made objects in a garden.

“They love a full-sun spot in the garden, with soil that drains well,” Klassen said. “I’ve even seen some people use a taller, upright form of *Weigela* as a small hedge in their garden.”

New cultivars

Over the years, consumer preferences shifted toward smaller garden spaces and lower-maintenance plants. Foley became involved in working with several breeders who are breeding compact *Weigela* cultivars with extended bloom periods, improved color contrasts and reliable performance.

“I’ve had the opportunity to collaborate with breeders and trial partners globally, helping to bring forward a new



My Monet® *Weigela florida* from Proven Winners is a dwarf variety with variegated foliage and pink flowers. PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY

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Midnight Sun® from Proven Winners maintains its tidy compact shape and leaves turn from red hues during summer to blazing orange in the fall. PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY

generation of *Weigela* that are far more adaptable and visually engaging than their predecessors,” Foley said.

According to Foley, the latest breeding breakthroughs in *Weigela* have been nothing short of transformational.

“These new cultivars are engineered to fit modern gardening needs: they stay naturally compact, offer more profuse and longer-lasting blooms, and maintain a neat, rounded habit with little to no pruning.”

Klassen added that while pruning isn’t necessary, if a gardener wants to shape the plants, a light prune right after the flowers are finished blooming is ideal.

Foley said the modern varieties are bred for improved branching and shape so they maintain a tidy habit without the heavy pruning. This makes them easy to grow and maintain for both homeowners and professionals. They’re also fast to establish in the landscape and are hardy in



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colder climates.

“*Weigela* are relatively low maintenance and quite durable, even in harsh climates like Denver,” LaPoint said.

LaPoint said for several years of his work with *Weigela*, he noticed demand was dropping on the classic cultivars as bold new genetics entered the marketplace.

“My first real experience of losing a sale to Proven Winners® varieties was with their Spilled Wine® variety (*Weigela florida* ‘Bokraspiwi’ PP23781, CP4655), which is a dwarf spreading *Weigela* that is very low maintenance and has a burgundy leaf with pink blooms,” LaPoint said. “A nursery in British Columbia was interested in a thousand Spilled Wine, and the Merlot simply was not a good substitute, although my prices and quality were great.” LaPoint said Proven Winners Color Choice *Weigela florida* introductions have been raising the bar on performance ever since.

He said Proven Winners replaced

Tuxedo™ *Weigela* with a superior *Weigela* Wine & Spirits® (*Weigela florida* ‘SMNWFGC’ PP34358, CPAF), with its dark leaves and white flowers.

“Merlot was replaced with Fine Wine® which was replaced with Very Fine Wine® (*Weigela florida* ‘SMNWFDFPD’ PP32223, CP7155), a stronger bloomer,” LaPoint said. “Ultimately, I believe that variety will be replaced with a very recent introduction called Sonic Bloom Wine® (*Weigela florida* ‘SMNWFVG’ PP35120, CPAF).”

He said Sonic Bloom Wine is the only dark-leaved rebloomer he has seen on the market.

“Hopefully the breeders they’re working with will continue to achieve great things with dark-leaved rebloomers,” LaPoint said.

Mackenzie said *Weigela* Prism™ Sunset (*Weigela hybrida* ‘WG19-108’) is a taller growing variety with striking new growth that lives up to its name.

“We are loving the Arabian Nights (*Weigela hybrida* ‘WG17-18’) and Midnight (*Weigela hybrida* ‘WG19-104’) of the Prism series for their dramatically dark foliage and compact form,” MacKenzie said.

Versatility

LaPoint said he personally thinks the power of *Weigela* is its versatility and durability.

“There are a ton of different color schemes and growth habits available,” LaPoint said. He added this helps landscape architects design *Weigela* varieties according to their own company’s branding guidelines.

Many of the new *Weigela* varieties are offered in branded programs.

LaPoint said he thinks the new reblooming options will take center stage as they can match commercial color schemes in the spring and in the summer. >>

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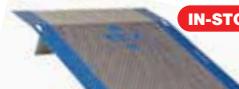
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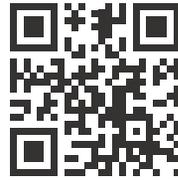
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Wine & Spirits® is a new development from Proven Winners with crisp white flowers against a dramatic dark foliage. PHOTO COURTESY OF SPRING MEADOW NURSERY

Foley said he is also seeing a shift toward cultivars bred for improved branching, denser foliage and repeat blooming. These include Raspberry Lemonade, Stunner, Electric Love, Peach Kiss and the Sonic Bloom series (all *Weigela florida*).

“These plants flower not only at the tips but also along the stem, giving a fuller floral presentation,” Foley said. “Additionally, many new introductions now feature dark, saturated foliage that contrasts beautifully with the blooms, adding landscape interest even when not in flower.”

He added that the new cultivars of *Weigela* fit well into smaller urban gardens, patio containers or high-visibility foundation plantings where consistency and curb appeal are key.

“They represent the kind of low-maintenance beauty that today’s homeowners are searching for,” Foley said. He said these varieties are easy to produce at commercial nurseries, add color in retail stores and are easy to plant and take care of for homeowners and landscape contractors. ©

Emily Hoard is an Oregon-based freelance journalist covering business, environmental and agricultural news. She has a background in community reporting and a master's degree in multimedia journalism. You can reach her at Hoard123@Gmail.com.