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Rhaphiolepis 'Eskimo'¹

W. L. Corley²

Department of Horticulture, Georgia Station
University of Georgia, Griffin, GA 30223

Origin

Rhaphiolepis x *delacourii* Andre 'Eskimo' is a seedling selection from a population collected in Japan by Dr. John Creech and assigned P.I. 277653 by the U.S. Plant Introduction Station in 1963. Plants were grown in a low maintenance (xeriscape) arboretum at the Georgia Station for 17 years and deemed superior germplasm for adaptability and pest resistance.

Description

'Eskimo' is an apparent hybrid of *R. umbellata*, Yeddo Hawthorn and *R. indica*, Indian Hawthorn. This accession apparently fits the description of *Rhaphiolepis* x *delacourii* Andre. It possesses cold hardiness and *Entomosporium* leafspot resistance found in Yeddo Hawthorn, the original species designation. 'Eskimo' is an evergreen shrub which grows to 2 m (6 ft) height x 2.5 m (8 ft) spread in sunny locations. Leaves are lustrous green with a purplish cast, elliptic to obovate, measuring 4.5 cm (1.8 in) long x 2.2 cm (0.8 in) wide. Margins are crenate-serrate from apex to midpoint. 'Eskimo' blooms for several weeks during mid-April to early May. Flowers are light pink (RHS 56D) at opening and white when mature. Bluish-black fruits (RHS 103A) are 1.1 cm (0.4 in) in diameter and persist from late summer into winter.

Adaptation

Rhaphiolepis is a popular coastal landscape plant for South Atlantic, Gulf Coast, and California regions. Salt spray, sandy soil, and drought tolerance make these plants very desirable for environmental landscapes. It is considered best adapted to USDA hardiness zones 8–10, with –12C (1F) the apparent critical low temperature for most Yeddo Hawthorn taxa. 'Eskimo' has survived –19C (–3F) landscape planting field temperatures and –15C (5F) in laboratory freeze tests (3). These data extend the adapted range to zone 7b (2). In addition, this new cultivar shows near immunity to *Entomosporium* leafspot (1), a common problem in shady areas with poor air drainage.

Propagation

Propagation has been quite successful using semi-hardwood cuttings taken in June to August. Cuttings were stuck under intermittent mist in a well-drained medium after a quick dip of 10,000 ppm IBA.

Availability

Cuttings have been distributed to interested propagators in the Georgia Green Industry and plants of the cultivar are presently offered by Wight Nurseries, P.O. Box 390, Cairo, GA 31728.

Literature Cited

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²Wildflower Project Coordinator.