

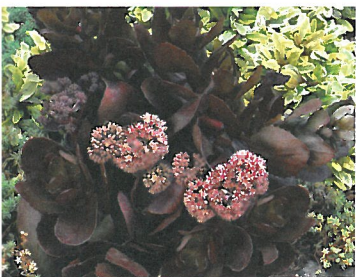
Sedums for low water landscapes

BY DAVID VAN DE VEN

I have written on perennial plants with low water requirements in the past, but with the warm, relatively dry, Canadian summer fast approaching, the topic is worth covering again. Professionals visit our greenhouses every day of the week, and rarely a day goes by that I am not asked what can be planted in full, hot sun, and never needs water. My answer is always the same — nothing! Of course, I always clarify my answer. First-year plantings always have water requirements; plants need some time to set deeper roots in the ground no matter the species. Extra care is always needed for the first growing season. If none is given, results will be poor at best, in my opinion, something no professional wants to be known for.

Once the first season has passed, we can lessen the worry for water in professional landscape installations if we choose species with a little bit of extra knowledge. *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' (stonecrop) has always been the old standby for full-sun, dry conditions — it is a great plant that performs well, but why not try something different? I could very easily list 20 different *Sedums* that would perform with the same, or better, performance, and all are commercially available. Four great varieties of *Sedum* to try in the professional landscape follow. **LT**

David Van de Ven is a perennial grower in Mount Albert, Ont.



Sedum 'Chocolate Drop' PPAF
Chocolate Drop stonecrop

Dark burgundy-purple foliage with soft pink flowers makes this brand-new introduction outstanding. Compact growth habit (25 cm tall) will make this stonecrop stand out from the rest. Hardy to zone four, able to withstand droughty conditions and the requirement of full sun make this

an excellent choice. Plant it like any other *Sedum*; as a specimen or in masses. Take care like any other for the first year, after which very little maintenance is needed. Use it as an accent in a container, and if it isn't watered too little or too much it should over-winter in the container just fine. *Photo Terra Nova Nurseries*



Sedum 'Hot Stuff' PP17212
Hot Stuff stonecrop

Sedum 'Hot Stuff' originates from another *Sedum* that most may know, *Sedum* 'Brilliant'. Like its parent, *Sedum* 'Hot Stuff' has a much brighter pink flower than the ever-popular 'Autumn Joy'. The biggest difference with *Sedum* 'Hot Stuff' is its compact growth habit. Many of the older, taller *Sedum* "melt" in the heat of summer, typically if too much

water is available. *Sedum* varieties like S. 'Hot Stuff' with a compact growth habit (grows to 25 cm tall) will remain standing through the entire season. Again, hardy to zone four, although this one I would push up to zone three! 'Hot Stuff' is able to withstand droughty conditions, making it an excellent replacement for the older varieties. I prefer *Sedum* with green foliage in large masses for all-season interest. In early spring they are one of the first to emerge, early summer masses of foliage add an interesting texture and in late summer and fall the flowers appear. Another interesting choice for containers — treat it well in the container and it will pop up again in spring! *Photo Terra Nova Nurseries*

Sedum kamtschaticum
Russian stonecrop

This choice is certainly not new, it's been commercially available for many, many years. Typically it only comes in smaller pot sizes because it is used as a groundcover (grows to 10 cm tall), though it is certainly not invasive. The last couple of years, Russian stonecrop has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity simply because of its ability to perform with great vigour within green roof systems. But it is still a great plant for professional designs. Hardy to zone three. Beautiful green foliage and brilliant yellow flowers in early summer make this a great *Sedum* to plant in any professional landscape. However, keep it out of containers, as its strong growth is too overpowering. *Photo: Walters Gardens*



Sedum sieboldii
October daphne

Another old *Sedum* selection that seems to have been all-but-forgotten. Again, this plant is typically available only in smaller pot sizes, and often sold as a groundcover, though although it tends to clump rather than spread. October daphne grows 15 cm tall and has fantastic blue/gray-green foliage with bright pink flowers in fall. Suitable for any full sun planting; preferable in masses or in containers where they can be noticed. Hardy to zone three with low water requirements makes this an easy addition to the professional design outside of irrigation zones. *Photo: Walters Gardens*

