Nandina or heavenly bamboo (Nandina domestica) is an evergreen or semi-evergreen broadleaf shrub, which is tough and durable. Large plants have been growing in South Carolina for 100 or more years without any care.

Bright berries of nandina (Nandina domestica) last from fall through spring.
Karen Russ, ©2007 HGIC, Clemson Extension

**Mature Height/Spread**
Nandina grows 5 to 7 feet high and spreads 3 to 5 feet. The plant looks like bamboo in its lightly branched, cane-like stems and delicate, fine-textured foliage. The leaves are divided into many 1- to 2-inch, pointed, oval leaflets, creating a lacy pattern. Young foliage is pinkish, then turns to soft light green. The foliage is tinged red in winter, especially in full sun and with some frost.

The flowers appear in May to June and are pinkish white. Each flower is ¼ to ½ inch across, appearing in loose, erect, 6- to 12-inch clusters at the end of the branches. If plants are grouped, shiny red berries, 1/3 inch in diameter, follow the flowers in September and persist into and through the winter. Single plants seldom fruit heavily.

Nandina loses its leaves at 10 °F. Stems are damaged at 5 °F, but the plant usually recovers fast. Careful pruning must be practiced. It is best to thin out old stems every year or head back old canes at varying lengths to produce a dense plant. Renew neglected shrubs by removing 1/3 of the oldest canes in the spring of each year for three years. Nandinas do well in USDA zones 6 through 9. Once established, nandinas are very drought tolerant plants.

Nandinas are rhizomatous, especially the straight species because of its larger size. This means that they spread slowly by underground stems to form small colonies.

**Growth Rate**
Nandina is a slow- to moderate-growing shrub. It grows 12 to 24 inches per year, depending on conditions, including location, light, fertility and water.

**Landscape Use**
Suggested uses for nandina include border, specimen plant and foundation, depending on the cultivar.

**Cultivation**
Nandina is easily transplanted from containers. It has fleshy roots, which aid in rapid recovery from transplanting. It can be moved at any time except midsummer. Nandina prefers moist, fertile soil, protected from harsh winds. Nandinas should be planted in partial shade to full sun. The color of the foliage varies depending on the amount of sun the plant receives. Leaves assume a reddish tint in winter when grown in full sun.
Problems
Nandina does not have any serious diseases or insect problems, and are considered deer resistant.

Invasiveness & Toxicity
*Nandina domestica* is considered an invasive plant in the Southeast US. Because of this potential, *Nandina domestica* and its cultivars that produce fruit are not recommended as suggested landscape plants*. However, some dwarf nandina cultivars do not produce fruit and would not present a problem.

Some bird species, such as cedar waxwing, northern mockingbird and American robin, will consume the berries in winter when other food sources are not available. The berries are toxic, as they contain cyanide, and can cause bird mortality if consumed in quantity**. Bird consumption of nandina fruit also aids in the spread of this plant.

The most commonly produced cultivars are included in the following sections. The cultivars producing fruit are listed last for purely educational purposes. If cultivars are listed in catalogs or in nurseries without of the mention of fruiting, SC residents will realize that these are indeed fruit-producing nandinas.

Fruitless Cultivars for SC Landscapes
- 'Fire Power' is a very compact plant that grows to 2 or 2½ feet tall and wide. New growth is lime green in summer, and foliage becomes bright red in fall and winter. No flowers or fruit are formed.

Invasive Cultivars Producing Abundant Fruit
- 'Alba' is a 4- to 6-foot shrub with creamy white berries and yellowish-green foliage that lacks the reddish colors of other nandinas. This cultivar is more susceptible to cold damage than the species.
- 'Compacta' is a semi-dwarf nandina and only reaches 4 feet in height. It has lacy foliage, which turns red to red-bronze in fall and winter. It produces a multitude of red-orange berries.
- 'Harbor Belle™ ('Jaytee', PP#14688) is a dwarf that maintains a height of 18 to 24 inches. Spring foliage has multi-colored hues of pink, then leaves mature to dark green. Red berries contrast with the burgundy and maroon fall foliage.
- 'Harbour Dwarf' is a freely spreading, low-growing (to 2 feet) plant and spreads to 3 feet
- 'Gulfstream' has a rounded form, and is a dwarf that grows to 3 to 3½ feet tall and 3 feet wide. New growth is bronze with orange tints. Summer foliage is deep blue-green and fall foliage becomes orange and red. It produces few if any berries.
- 'Nana' or 'Nana Atropurpurea' is a dwarf that grows to 2 to 3 feet with bright green foliage in summer that turns crimson red in winter. Plants are dense and compact. This plant rarely blooms or sets fruit.
- Obsession ('Seika' PP#21891) is a dwarf selection that grows to 2 to 2½ feet tall and wide. It is a sport of ‘Gulfstream’, with bright red young foliage, deep green mature foliage, and again brilliant red in fall and winter. It does not produce flowers or fruit.
- 'Woods Dwarf' is a rounded dwarf form to 3 feet with dense, crimson red foliage in winter. This plant rarely blooms or sets fruit.
- Sienna Sunrise® ('Monfar', PP#14693) grows to 3 to 4 feet tall and 2 feet wide. It has fiery red spring foliage that changes to green in summer. The fall foliage has red highlights. This nandina rarely blooms or sets fruit.
- 'Lemon Lime' (PP#24749) grows into a compact plant that is 3 to 4 feet tall and wide. The new foliage emerges yellow-green and turns to a richer lime green. Lemon Lime does not produce flowers and fruit.
wide. Underground stems or rhizomes send up stems several inches from the parent plant, making it a good groundcover. Leaves emerge with coppery tints. Winter foliage has reddish to purplish tones.

- 'Leucocarpa' is similar to the species, but the foliage lacks the typical reddish tinge. The berries are creamy yellow on plants that grow to 6 feet tall and 3 to 5 feet wide.

- 'Moon Bay' (PP#5659) is a dwarf selection that grows to 2 to 3 feet tall and wide. The leaves are lime green in spring and brilliant red in fall. The white flowers are held on large panicles, and followed by bright red berries.

- 'Moyer's Red' is a semi-dwarf form, maturing to a height of 4 to 6 feet and 2 to 5 feet wide. Fall color is brilliant red with orange overtones. The large clusters of flowers are light pink rather than white, and fruits are red.

- Plum Passion® ('Monum', PP#12069) is a semi-dwarf that grows to 4 to 5 feet tall and 3 feet wide. Foliage is a deep purple-red in spring, dark green in summer, and purple red in fall and winter. White flowers are followed by bright red berries.

References:
*The Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council

Revised by Joey Williamson, HGIC Horticulture Extension Agent, Clemson University, 10/15. Originally prepared by Marjan Kluepfel, HGIC Information Specialist, and Bob Polomski, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Clemson University. New 05/99. Images added 03/07.

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