Parrotia persica - Persian Parrotia (Hamamelidaceae)

Parrotia persica is usually a low-branched and multi-stemmed small specimen tree with beautiful, exfoliating bark, flowers having showy red stamens, and leaves that turn from dark green in summer to an autumn color consisting of a mix of brilliant yellow, orange and red. Persian Parrotia provides significant autumn and winter interest.

Features

Form
-small deciduous tree, about 30' tall x 20' wide, rounded, upright, wide spreading branches, often with several trunks (shrub form)
-moderate to fast growth rate (1-1.5' per year)

Culture
-sun to light shade; prefers well-drained, slightly acid (pH 6.0-6.5), loam soils, but will tolerate some alkalinity; avoid exposure to drying winds.
-no serious pest problems that would limit its use in the landscape
-propagated by cuttings or seeds
-limited availability in containers or B&B

Foliage
-alternate arrangement
-simple, 2.5-5" long x 1-2.5" wide, oval to ovobovate-oblong
-conspicuous stipules
-coarsely crenate-dentate above the middle, undulate,
(shape resembles Hamamelis)
-dark green in summer; yellow, orange to brilliant red in autumn if plant is grown in full sun

Flowers
-flowers without petals (apetalous), have showy red stamens, appear before leaves (Mar.– Apr.)
-floral display not particularly noticeable

Fruits
-a brown, 2-valved capsule; ornamentally insignificant

Twigs
-lightly pubescent when young, turning brownish and smooth as it matures

Trunk
-attractive, exfoliating with grayish green and white in older trunks. Resembles Cornus kousa, Pinus bungeana, or Platanus occidentalis in general pattern.

Usage

Function
-specimen, focal point, accent, foundation planting for larger structures

Texture
-medium in leaf and when bare

Assets
-outstanding autumn color (maximized if plant placed in full sun) and exfoliating bark
-significant tolerance to environmental stresses, once established

Liabilities
-may show some winter damage in colder parts of zone 5
-may be attacked by Japanese beetle

Habitat
-Zones (4) 5 to 8
-Native to Iran, Iraq

Selections

Alternates
-other small trees with multi-season interest (Acer griseum, Acer palmatum, etc)

Cultivars - Variants - Related species
-The species is the most common form available

Notes: The genus Parrotia was named after the German naturalist, F.W. Parrot; the specific epithet persica refers to its origin in Persia (Iran). This tree is related to the Witchhazels and has leaves that are quite similar; it flowers early in spring before the foliage but is most desirable as an ornamental plant because of its striking bark and potentially outstanding autumn color.

P. persica is a small, deciduous, hardy tree that grows wild from northern Iran to the Caucasus. This attractive tree is valued for its colorful foliage in the autumn, which turns to vivid shades of yellow, red, pink, orange and bronze. This tree, which grows up to 30' high, is commonly known as the Persian Parrotia and Persian Witchhazel. Its 3-4", oval or oblong-shaped leaves are glossy dark green. The Persian Parrotia may be grown with a single trunk or multiple trunks; however, the branches often grow to the ground hiding the trunk anyway. In early spring, flowers, having no petals are produced. They merely consist of red stamens, which are unnoticeable from afar, but are interesting close up. The seedpods that follow are brown and 1/2" long.