**Pieris japonica** - Japanese Pieris *(Ericaceae)*

*Pieris japonica* is an upright, ornamental shrub. Japanese Pieris is noted for emerging bronzed foliage, dark evergreen mature leaves, tiered branching, and showy white, droopy flower clusters in late winter.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- medium shrub
- to 10' tall x 8' wide but often smaller
- upright columnar in youth, becoming a spreading mound with age, somewhat tiered branching, with branching to the ground
- slow rate

**Culture**
- partial to full shade
- prefers a moist, rich, well-drained, slightly acid soil
- intolerant of full sun (in winter) and soil compaction

**Foliage**
- evergreen, dark green
- alternate along stem becoming clustered at stem termini
- obovate with a cuneate base narrowing to a yellow petiole
- entire margins
- glabrous (shiny)
- new growth at first red or bronzed, becoming light green then eventually dark green

**Flowers**
- white to creamy
- effective for 2-3 weeks in Mar.-Apr. and very showy
- pendulous branched inflorescences to 6" long
- each flower inverted urn-shaped and contrasting with the dark evergreen foliage
- floral buds form in previous summer and are attractive as immature inflorescences during winter

**Fruits**
- not showy but noticeable
- brown 5-valved capsules

**Twigs**
- yellow-red stems changing to dark gray branches, lightly furrowed and mottled with patches of silver
- buds very small and tan

**Trunk**
- dark gray
- furrowed to platy

**USAGE**

**Function**
- foundation plant, usually as a specimen shrub

**Texture**
- fine texture
- thick density

**Assets**
- attractive year-round evergreen foliage
- showy white inflorescences in late winter and very early spring
- bronzed new foliage in early spring
- branching to the ground

**Liabilities**
- intolerance of full sun (winter desiccation)
- lace bug problems (sucks juice from leaves and causes yellowing)
- winter dieback often aided by phytophthora infestations on the stems
- chlorosis due to alkaline pH and iron deficiency

**Habitat**
- Zone 5
- Native to Japan

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- broadleaf evergreen shrubs (*Buxus* hybrids, *Kalmia latifolia*, *Rhododendron* species, *Yucca filamentosa*, etc.)
- shrubs with late winter or early spring flowers (*Chaenomeles speciosa*, *Cornus mas*, *Corylus avellana 'Contorta*', *Hamamelis vernalis*, etc.)

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**
- *P. japonica 'Dorothy Wycoff'* - dark red floral buds emerge as light pink flowers
- *P. japonica 'Mountain Fire'* - fiery new foliage is a brilliant red instead of bronzed; perhaps the most common cultivar
- *P. japonica 'Purity'* - larger pure-white flowers on compact plants that bloom at an early age
- *P. japonica 'Red Mill'* - emergent red leaves mature to dark green but are thick and leathery, white flowers last a week longer than normal, possesses a dense growth habit, and reportedly disease and pest resistant
-- *P. japonica 'Scarlett O'Hara'* - white flowers on a narrow upright growth habit
- *P. japonica 'Variegata'* - young foliage emerges red, maturing to green with creamy-white leaf margins

- *Pieris 'Brouwer's Beauty'* - compact hybrid (of *Pieris japonica* and *Pieris floribunda*) which is spreading, more resistant to lace bug, more tolerant of alkaline soil pH, and has purplish-pink floral buds