

RHS Chelsea 2012: Hillier New Plant Introduction

Hillier Nurseries launches *Choisya* 'Aztec Gold', the latest masterpiece from Alan Postill, 50 years a Hillier plantsman

New to Hillier Nurseries, the UK & the world in 2012

Celebrating **50 years** this summer as a Hillier plantsman, man and boy, Alan Postill has done it again. The highly respected propagator of *Daphne bholua* 'Jaqueline Postill' and *Digitalis* 'Serendipity' has bred a sensational new golden form of the Mexican orange blossom, which is up for Chelsea New Plant of the Year.

Choisya 'Aztec Gold' is an attractive, bushy, evergreen shrub with striking, golden, aromatic foliage - rich gold at the ends of the shoots, green-gold in the heart of the plant. Its slender leaflets are very waxy and weather resistant, and do not suffer the winter damage of other golden foliage varieties. In spring and early summer, and then again in autumn, delicious almond-scented white flowers appear, attracting bees and butterflies.

In *Choisya* 'Aztec Gold', Alan Postill has realised his objective of creating a remarkably strong-growing, golden foliage form of the *Choisya* 'Aztec Pearl', which Hillier introduced 30 years ago in 1982, and has since become one of the nation's best-selling and best-loved garden shrubs. Knowing its pedigree and performance in real gardens, Alan selected *Choisya* 'Aztec Pearl' as one of the parent plants for the new variety.

Choisya 'Aztec Gold' performs well in any reasonably fertile well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade, although the colour will be less golden in shade, of course. It is ideally suited to a mixed border or a large container, and planted with other gold foliage or gold variegated shrubs, or contrasted with blue flowers or plum-purple foliage. For more planting ideas, see Andrew McIndoe's review on page 2 of this release.

Available from: Summer 2012
RRP: £11.99

Pot Size: 3 litre
Height/Spread: 1.2 x 1.2 m (4 x 4ft.)

Media Contact

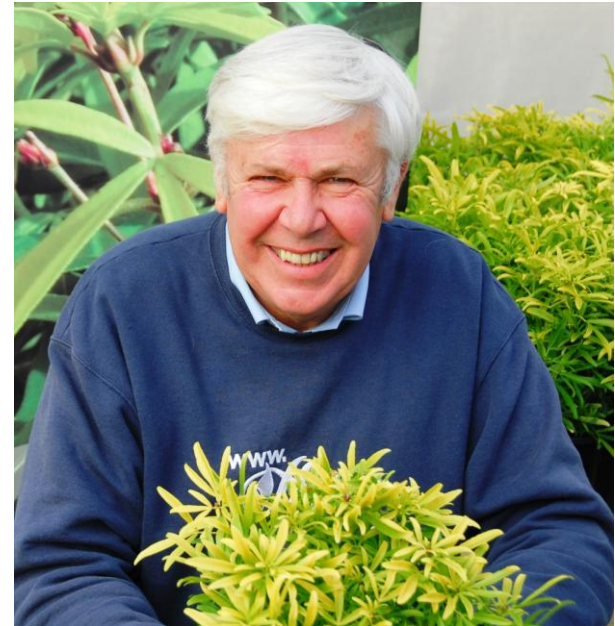
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Choisya 'Aztec Gold'

A Few Words by Andrew McIndoe, MD of Hillier Nurseries and Hillier Chelsea designer

2012 sees the launch of a wonderful new evergreen shrub: *Choisya* 'Aztec Gold'. Bred by Master Propagator Alan Postill, the man responsible for *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill', Hillier Hybrid hellebores and other classic garden plants, this new choisya looks set to become every bit as popular as the bestselling *Choisya* 'Aztec Pearl'.

Among Hillier's most popular shrubs, choisya, the Mexican orange blossom needs little introduction. However, it is worth reminding ourselves why choisya are so widely planted. Hardy evergreen shrubs, choisyas grow on most soils in sun or partial shade. The plain green *Choisya ternata* in fact thrives in reasonably heavy shade, and still manages to bloom. In brighter situations, choisyas bloom twice a year, carrying a profusion of white, sometimes pink tinged flowers that are attractive to bees, butterflies and pollinating insects.

Choisya 'Aztec Pearl', one of the parent plants of *Choisya* 'Aztec Gold', was raised at Hillier Nurseries in 1982, and I remember staging it for the first time at Chelsea a few years later. Since then, it has become one of the essential flowering shrubs in the English garden. It is a versatile plant that lends itself to schemes ranging from the most sophisticated to the most utilitarian. The combination of white flowers and finely cut green leaves is timelessly popular. Most important of all, *Choisya* 'Aztec Pearl' is a good garden plant, requiring minimal maintenance and delivering a lot for little effort, traits which it has passed onto its offspring.

Choisya 'Aztec Gold' is a golden foliage evergreen with a subtlety that will endear it to even those gardeners that "don't do yellow". In sun, the leaves at the ends of the shoots are rich golden yellow, while those in the heart of the plant maintain a greener hue. In shade, the overall colour leans towards lime; more subtle but still cheerily pleasing.

The variation in the foliage colour between the young and old leaves gives the plant depth and a three dimensional quality often lacking in plain yellow evergreens. *Choisya* 'Aztec Gold' will make the perfect planting partner for gold and green variegations, and it will liven up heavy plain green leaves. I can see it against a shaded fence clad in *Hedera colchica* 'Sulphur Heart' with its lime and emerald and gold splashed leaves. I might plant the dark dramatic *Viburnum davidii* alongside or underplant with the lively acid green foliage of *Heuchera* 'Lime Marmalade'.

It will undoubtedly work well with any of the green and gold euonymus. In a slightly shaded courtyard, I would grow it in a large pot, perhaps alongside a pot planted with *Euonymus japonicus* 'Microphyllus Pulchellus'. This compact box-like evergreen is brilliant for a container. It has small dark green leaves flushed with gold; more so at the tips of the upright shoots.

Choisya 'Aztec Gold' is undoubtedly a versatile plant which displays amazing flower power. I expect to be extolling its virtues for years to come.

Andy McIndoe, 2012

